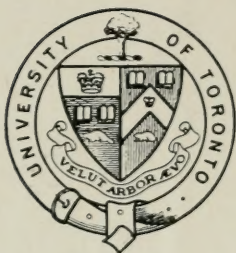


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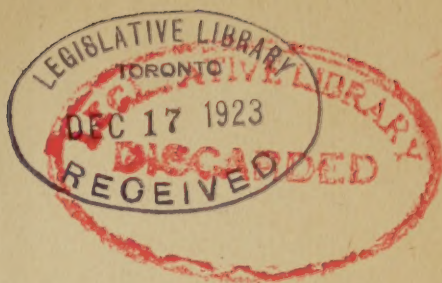
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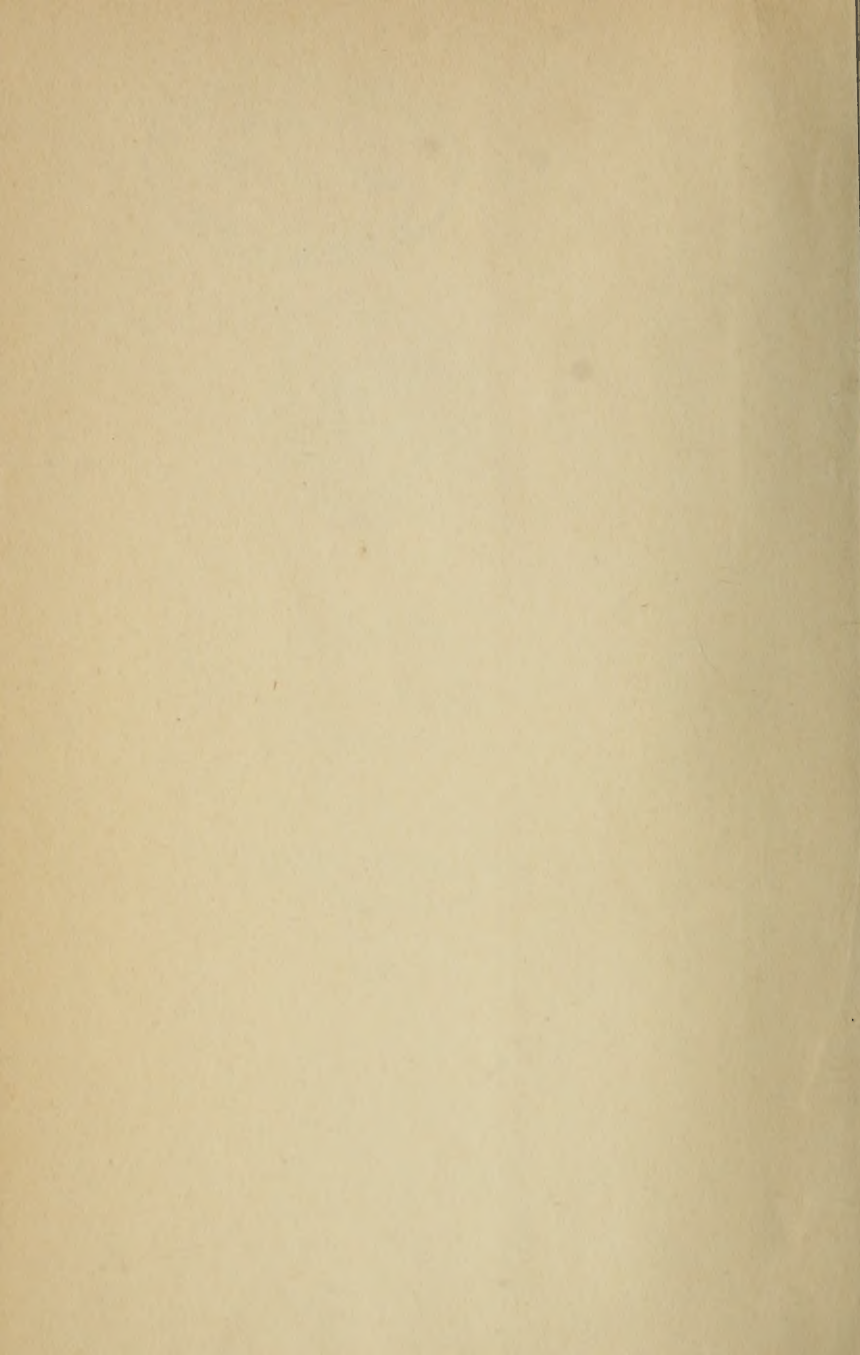
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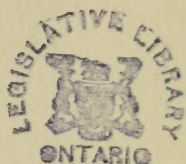
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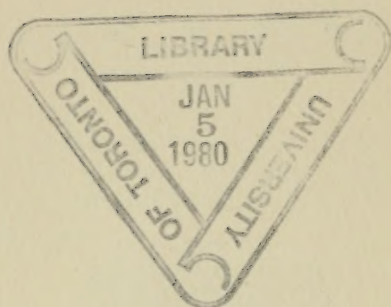
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TO MY WIFE

FOREWORD

IF anyone, allured by the title of this book, expects to find in it any matter of scandal, political or social, let him be warned at once that he need read no further. No reputation—except perhaps my own—will be the worse of anything to be found herein. I have no horrid secrets of Irish politics to reveal, no skeletons in the cupboard of anybody's private life to drag into the light of day. This book is a personal study of the past decade of Irish life which prefers to illustrate that period by its personalities rather than by its events. What I think about those personalities with whom I came in contact I set down here neither with favour nor with malice, writing the men as I see them for the good of things as they are. To that extent, and to that extent only, this book justifies its title.

The simplest way to explain what is in your own mind is usually to contradict what is in somebody else's. I can, perhaps, best write this prefatory *apologia* for these Indiscretions by contrasting my treatment of their subject with another's treatment of his subject. Stephen McKenna, in "While I Remember," covers incidentally in part much the same field of

history, though from an English rather than an Irish angle, as I cover here. And this is his conception of the manner in which a young man writing memoirs—a procedure which in itself scarcely requires apology in these days—should go about his business :

“ It is with the life of that generation, and not with gossip about this or that member of it that I am concerned. . . . It is still believed by some who were trained in a tradition of reticence that intimate portraits and studies should be withheld so long as the originals or their friends can be offended or hurt by unsought publicity. While a man of even thirty-three, spending most of his life in London, may have met more than a few of the statesmen and financiers, the sailors and soldiers, the artists, authors and actors who now have chief place in the interest of their countrymen, I feel that it would be impudent for him to scatter his unsolicited opinion on those whom he has been invited to meet privately. This book will therefore be free from what has been called an ‘ index of improper names.’ It would be no less impudent for him to assume that anyone is interested in the insignificances of his private life.”

Now this seems to me thoroughly bad doctrine. There are certain restraints imposed by good manners as well as those imposed by the laws of libel. There are certain indiscretions which certainly no journalist who values his own professional usefulness would permit himself. There are certain trivialities about the personalities of figures in public life which may very well be left to those who care to deal in that sort of thing. But in what way, one may surely ask, is it more "impudent" for a writer to "scatter his unsolicited opinion" on the interesting people he has met, than it is for him to scatter his opinion, equally unsolicited, on the history of his own time considered in its broader and more impersonal aspects? The only difference in point of impudence appears to me to be that in the one case he may achieve something useful, in the other more probably something merely dull.

Shane Leslie's *apologia* for his "The End of a Chapter" was that "people who are old enough to write memoirs have usually lost their memories." Carrying the point a little further, Stephen McKenna makes it his excuse for the publication of his book that the opinions and recollections of middle life are so seldom articulate. "We are hardly ever allowed to look through the spectacles of thirty at the world as it appears

to the eyes of thirty"; and "possibly there is still room for recollections that have frankly been written for publication before age has too greatly blurred the outline of memory or distance eliminated too ruthlessly the unimportant." For the life of me, I cannot see why, if one is to be permitted at all to "look through the spectacles of thirty at the world as it appears to the eyes of thirty," one should at the same time be required by respect for some "tradition of reticence" to turn a blind eye to precisely the most interesting and important thing in the world—which is its personalities.

Possibly there is here an inevitable conflict between the outlook of the novelist and that of the journalist. It occurs again in the matter of the "insignificances of one's private life." The journalist, in a sense, has no private life. He is a conduit pipe through which pass impressions of the men and the things of his time. He has his own "tradition of reticence," but it does not permit him to believe that it is any part of the duty of anyone who plays the *rôle* of the spectator and commentator in life to stand between the public and the public personalities of the day. He must believe, on the contrary, that it is perhaps a most essential part of his business to add to the public knowledge of those personalities.

And why not? To stand in the limelight of publicity is one of the recognised penalties of public life. He who shuns that limelight will be well advised to have no other than a private life. It is fair to say that few figures in public life do shun its inevitable, and indeed wholesome, limelight. If a democracy is to be intelligent it must be informed about the personalities of its leaders in politics, in letters and the arts. And it must be informed about them while they are alive and active, not put off with the plea that really they or their friends might be hurt if anybody who happens to know them records his impressions of them before the indeed decent tradition of "*de mortuis*" has made such "*unsolicited opinions*" charitable—if not superfluous. There is a place for the kindly funeral oration and for the pious cairn of history. But there surely is a place also for the more candid comment of the contemporary. Moreover, Ireland is peculiarly a country where personal history depends most on oral tradition. "How many orators there are," wrote an Englishman in Dublin a little time ago as he contemplated the historical portraits in the National Gallery, "how many duellists, patriots, rebels of whom nothing but their personal attractiveness is remembered?"

This is perhaps something of a digression, but

it presents also all the *apologia* that seems to be needed. I claim for these impressions no such high function as I have defined above. They are no more than notes, by one who happened to be brought in touch with them, upon the personalities of a corner of the world which has been much in the world's eye—notes which may have an intrinsic interest, which may contribute something not wholly valueless to the estimate of a crisis in the history of a country for which one may perhaps best hope that for some time to come it will have no history.

As I write this foreword such is not yet Ireland's happy fortune. Packing into a few years America's experience of decades, she has had to face civil war following immediately upon the war of independence. The rapid sequence of events may seem to make much of what has been written here already ancient history. On the other hand, subsequent events may lend to some possibly controversial opinions expressed in the following pages an *ex post facto* justification which they would not otherwise have possessed. For any other imperfections of what has been written here in the leisure moments of busy days I have to ask the reader's indulgence.

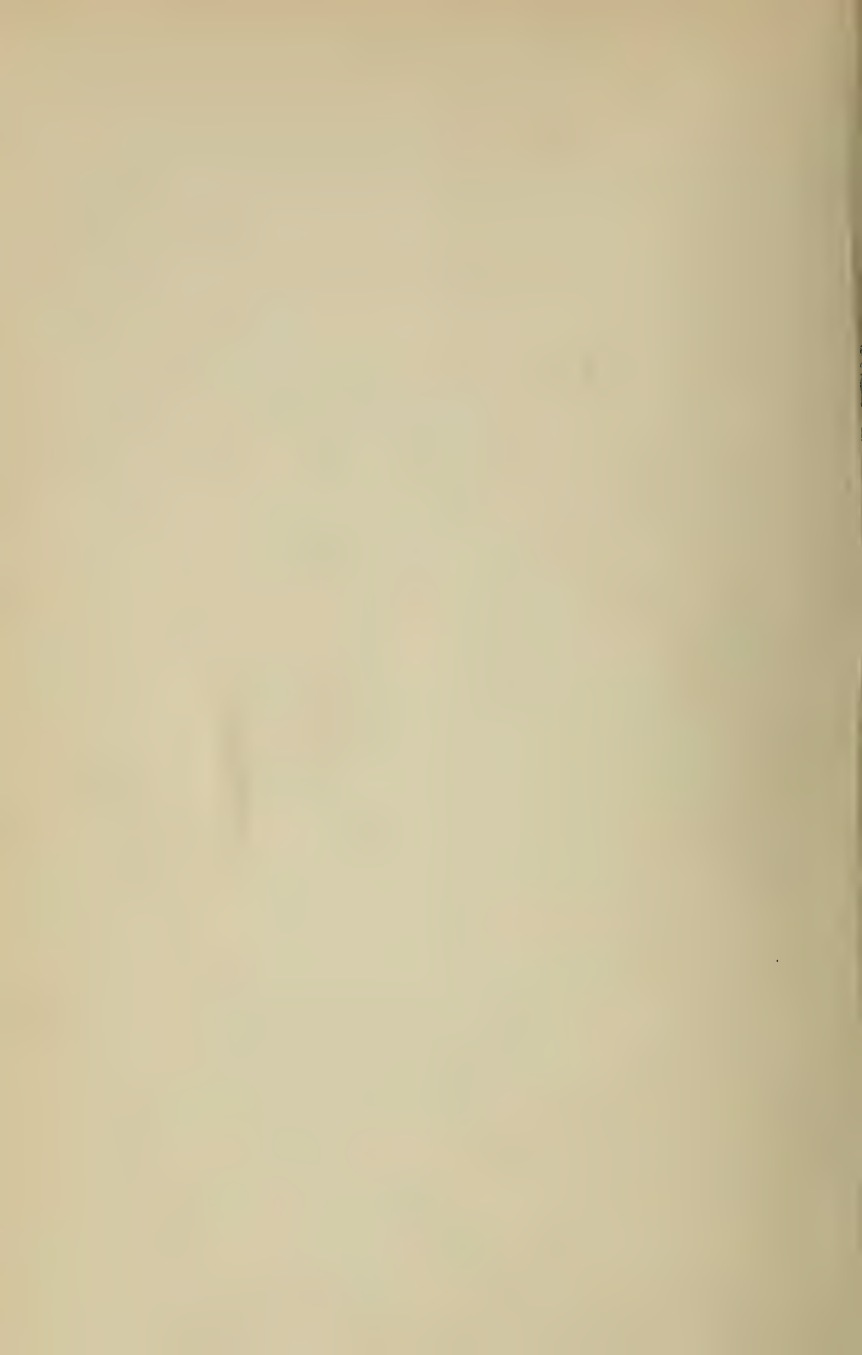
W. B. W.

London, 1922.

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IRISH INDISCRETIONS

CHAPTER I

AN END AND A BEGINNING

Republicans in Chelsea—The Pageant of a Decade—The New Irish Question—Dublin in Transition—The Irish Revival—First Days of the Republic—The Art of Conversation—Dublin Acoustics—How the Irish Capital Lives—The Rise of the Provinces—The Advance of the Western Marches—"Irish Ireland"—The Gaelic Language—The Master Motive—A Very Foreign Country—The Figure with the Pike—The Protestant Corner—What "Ulster" Is—The Broken Spell of Belfast.

I.

OUT of the bustle of the King's Road into one of the most discreet backwaters of Chelsea swing a couple of taxicabs. They pull up at one of those houses which have the air of being in London but not of it. Here in this particular byway the numbers run like the mazes of a dance,



and this particular house seems to be chosen with an eye to defying discovery by any but the most persistent seeker.

Nor do the members of the group which the taxis decant at the door of the discreet house seem somehow quite to "belong" to the district. For we have not here the flowing lines of tie, of hat, of coat which bespeak the studios; but neither have we the more elegant world of Chelsea, for these sack suits, these slouch hats, these soft collars surely never came out of Savile Row.

They are seven, this group of young and youngish men. Seven not very remarkable looking men, but their presence here on the pavement of Chelsea is a portent. Five of them—Griffith, Collins, Barton, Gavan Duffy, Duggan—are plenipotentiaries of the Irish Republic; the other two—Erskine Childers and Desmond Fitzgerald—their principal secretaries. To-morrow these men, scarcely known even in their own country five years ago, will be at Downing Street pitting their wits and the moral resources of the small nation which they represent against the power of the British Empire and the nimble mind of the most adroit politician in modern Europe.

As one leaves Chelsea, in the warm evening

of this October day of the long summer of 1921, to turn back to the larger London wherein Ireland and its affairs are but an incident, one feels that here anyhow is the end of a chapter. While thousands of London Irishmen waited at Euston to welcome their delegates arriving by the Irish mail, King George drove into the station to go North on a visit to Manchester ; and the waiting thousands cheered. In the generous mood of the time, it would not take much to make an English crowd cheer the representatives of the Irish Republic in London.

For your Englishman, as an Irishman—Bernard Shaw—discovered long ago, is a romantic fellow. There is a romantic appeal about all revolutions, and the Englishman has been on the popular side of almost every European revolutionary movement of modern times. He had a sneaking sentimental sympathy for the Irish revolutionary movement, but it was held severely in check by the consideration that these revolutionaries were British subjects, and therefore rebels. And there is all the difference in the world between your own rebels and somebody else's. But now his own Government is ready to talk with these rebels—without even demanding beforehand that they should recognise themselves as rebels. There is not the same reason now why these Irishmen,

villains of the piece only a couple of months ago, should not get the credit of being, after all, romantic figures.

In a word, the sentimental Englishman's pent-up fondness for the romance of revolution is now released for the benefit of Ireland. All of this feeling may not last—for above his substratum of solid characteristics the Englishman carries a superficial instability often very disconcerting—but some of it certainly will last. And because of it—one felt even then at the outset of the London Conference—the Irish issue can never be quite the same again. It is, indeed, the end of a chapter.

II.

Backwards from this date one sees unfold, as it were, the pageant of a decade in Ireland. The ten years during which it was my fortune to live and work in Ireland have been, perhaps, the most thickly thronged with incident of all her stormy history. They were the years which opened with the introduction of the third Home Rule Bill after the long fight, brought to success only with the aid of the Nationalist Parliamentary Party, for the limiting of the veto of the House of Lords. Long before the Bill had neared the end of its

ordeal of thrice running the gauntlet of the Lords, there came the first prelude of violence in Ireland—the great Dublin strike of 1913 ; an event whose significance in Irish history is still little understood outside Ireland, or, for that matter, within it.

Followed the arming of Ulster, and the re-introduction of force as an argument in British politics by an avowedly constitutional party. As the inevitable sequel came the arming of the South, the beginning of the hosting to the tramp of whose marching feet Ireland was to re-echo till the summer of 1921. And then the European War, which for a moment seemed to have resolved all the tortuous complexities of the Irish mess. So through folly and disappointment to the pitiful tragedy of the rising of 1916, with its aftermath of worse futilities which swung an Ireland at one with the Allied cause into a position first of sulky neutrality, and then, in the last year of the war and after it was over, of continuous and violent revolt against British rule.

The incidents of this warfare tended somewhat to obscure the real significance of the period. It was a period wherein the Irish question acquired an enormously increased influence upon the relations between Great Britain and her neighbours on the Continent and across the Atlantic.

It was a period which posed the question under a new form : Ireland no longer petitioned from the generosity of Britain certain local liberties ; she came to claim at the bar of nations her title to independence.

There are two ways of attempting to depict such a period. One may illustrate it in the method of the historian by its events ; or one may illustrate it in the method of the commentator by its personalities. I have made some earlier essays in the former method, but I propose here to adopt the latter. There are few countries in Europe where personalities count for so much in affairs as in Ireland. I shall touch here upon the history of Irish politics, and of literary and artistic movements, only in so far as may be necessary to indicate the background against which the people with whom I deal move and have their being.

III.

Dublin during the earlier part of the period of which I write was socially a city of transition. So much was inevitable from the nature of the political compromise of the time. There was always something unreal about the situation in which Ireland, as represented by the Nationalist

Party, accepting from the Liberals in full settlement of her traditional claim to freedom less of the essentials of self-government than Parnell had demanded or Gladstone offered, appeared in a new *rôle* of the trusting friend of England. Either the earlier Ireland subdued and quiescent, or the later Ireland defiant and in arms, was more in accord with the logic of things than this Ireland of the transition which was neither the one nor the other. The Sinn Feiners had all the logic on their side when they restored Dublin Castle and the Viceregal Lodge to their natural positions as strong points of an occupying garrison.

Under the Viceroyalty of Lord Aberdeen the social situation in Dublin was anomalous in the extreme. The Unionists, normally the sole *habitués* of Viceregal functions, except for certain formal and ceremonial relations boycotted a Court which they detested as much for its social policy as for its political bias. The shop-keepers of Dublin, Nationalists almost to a man, vied with one another for the cheap enough honour of inclusion in the Viceregal visiting list. Letters and the arts found no place for themselves in this dubious *milieu*.

Dublin in this period was in no real sense a capital city. It was a second-rate provincial town, peopled socially, aside from the "garrison"

class, by political hangers-on and social climbers. While the Castle and the Lodge hung uneasily like Mahomet's coffin between the heaven of respectability and the earth of ostracism, the true political center of Ireland was not in Ireland at all ; it was at Westminster—and Westminster, there was a certain uneasy feeling even in those days, was a political center out of focus for Ireland.

John Redmond, the leader of the Nationalist Party, was a visitor rarely seen in Dublin except for occasional political meetings. Though every autumn saw him at his country lodge at Aughavanagh in the Wicklow mountains, most of the latter part of his life was spent chiefly in London, in a small Kensington flat, and his house in Dublin was closed. John Dillon, his chief lieutenant and successor as leader of the Party, had and used a house in Dublin ; but, though his appearances in the Irish capital were more frequent than Redmond's, his home was never a rallying place of political activity.

There was, indeed, at this period no political activity in Dublin, or in fact, to superficial appearance, in Ireland generally. There was a considerable business of machine-made politics, but that was all. The discipline of a pledge-bound party, which itself operated chiefly outside

the country, cast Irish politics in an inflexible mould of uniformity, and established a rigid standard of political orthodoxy. It was a condition which produced inevitably a certain vacuum of living political thought in Ireland, and most of all in the capital. With the political energies of Ireland concentrated at Westminster, public life within the country suffered stagnation. Irish politics were set in a stereotyped course which might ultimately be profitable, but certainly was not romantic. But, on the other hand, Irish idealism was slowly and gradually in process of renewal under the influence of those agencies which are known comprehensively as the Irish Revival. It was a period wherein much of the youth of Ireland grew indifferent to politics, and sought an outlet for its energies in other directions.

One sensed the subtle change in the atmosphere of Dublin very markedly in the early days of the "Irish Republic," after the General Election of 1918 had replaced the Nationalist Parliamentary Party by Sinn Féin. Where most before had been indifferent to politics, cynical, or at the best lukewarmly loyal to their accepted leaders, now everybody was furiously interested in politics. The "Irish Republic," then and especially a little later when it was "on the run" before military repression and the subsequent unofficial

Terror, was only able to function at all because it enjoyed, in a degree which few Governments have ever enjoyed, the active, as distinct from the usually passive, "consent of the governed."

These were days when the sense of history in the making stirred the blood ; when it was "good to be alive, and to be young was very heaven"—particularly if one was "wanted" and spent his days dodging the forces of the Crown ; while even the more casual resident of Dublin had the feeling that he was privileged to be a sharer in dramatic days as some solace for the chance of stopping a stray bullet. The "Irish Republic" might be proscribed, but its very proscription invested it with the glamour of romance. Its representatives met—secretly, but that only added to the excitement of the thing—in Dublin. Dublin felt itself to be once more a capital city, as it had not been since the days of Grattan's Parliament more than a century before.

And everybody talked—Heavens, how they talked ! The latest "stunt" of the Republican leaders for twisting the British Lion's tail, the latest hairbreadth escape of some much wanted revolutionary—these were on everybody's tongue. In the time of the Curfew Æ bemoaned the threatened extinction of the last art left to Dublin, the art of conversation ; but the Curfew did not

at all extinguish it. The only difference it made was to raise the art to a higher pitch of perfection by adding the element of a race against the clock. Indeed, it is questionable whether in certain instances the imposition of a time-limit did not raise the quality of Dublin conversation.

Dublin has always been enriched by the presence of a large number of people who seemed to have nothing in particular to do and enough money on which to do it. How they achieved this feat, especially when the war brought the change in financial values, was and remains a mystery. There is a song of the United Arts Club, known as the Club Circular, which sets forth that included in its membership

“ There are clever folk who lecture,
There are several who live by architecture,
But the Club is rife
With folk whose life
Is a matter of conjecture.”

The thrust is as true of a certain class in Dublin in general as of the United Arts Club. And besides people to talk, Dublin never lacks subjects about which to talk. George Moore once described the acoustic properties of Dublin as the finest of any city in Europe. It is a condition which has its disadvantages—illustrated in the person of one of those, of a very different type

from him, who died with Francis Sheehy-Skeffington at the hands of the crazy Bowen Colthurst during the 1916 rising—but its advantages for conversational purposes outweigh its defects. And in the days of the Republic on the run George Moore himself—whose “champagne bottle shoulders” were at this period hardly ever to be seen “emerging from the Shelbourne Hotel”—would have been astonished at the speed and facility with which the news that somebody had dropped a pin in one quarter of Dublin reached all corners of the Irish capital.

For the journalist it was the ideal city. One sat around at certain strategic points with the assurance that in due course any news worth knowing would reach him without effort on his own part. Perhaps the secret of how a large section of the population of Dublin exists is that its members live, if not by doing one another's laundry according to the famous model, at least by washing one another's dirty linen or otherwise minding one another's business.

IV.

But Dublin, as its people most of all are apt to forget, is not Ireland any more than London is England or Paris is France. And in the transition

period of which I have spoken Dublin was perhaps less representative of the country than at any other time. Historically the period may indeed be conceived as a slow rising against the capital and the influences for which it stood of the provinces, and especially of the more remote provinces which were not provincial. In other words, Irish Ireland woke and stirred and finally came up against the English Pale. The history of the period—an unwritten history—is that of the advance of the Western Marches to St. George's Channel.

The emergence of Irish Ireland is a phenomenon little understood on the English side of the Channel; but it is the clue to the whole transformation on the Irish side. Though its results only began to manifest themselves during the last few years, they represented the culminating point of a generation of development—that generation which began with the foundation of the Gaelic League by Douglas Hyde.

By most Englishmen, including not a few who should know better, the fact that Eamonn de Valera, during his correspondence with Lloyd George which preceded the London Conference, wrote his letters in Gaelic and forwarded English copies marked 'official translation' was regarded as a foolish, and even provocative, affectation

Apparently it never occurred to them that there was a simpler explanation—namely that the use of the Irish language was the distinctive mark of the new Irish movement.

“A people without its language,” wrote Thomas Davis in the 'forties of the last century, “is only half a nation. A nation owes it to itself to conserve its language more than its territories—it is a barrier more sure and a frontier more important than fortresses and rivers. . . . To lose your mother tongue and learn that of the foreigner is the worst mark of conquest: it is the spirit which one loads with chains.” For good or ill the sentiment expressed in those words had since become the master-motive of all Nationalist Ireland.

The revival not alone of the Gaelic language, but also of the whole latent heritage of Gaelic culture, widely different in spirit from English culture, which the language enshrined, becomes less remarkable when certain facts are taken into account. The history of Ireland as an English-speaking country begins, for the greater part of its people, not much more than a century ago. For many it begins only half a century ago. For a number which is not unimportant—considerably more than half a million, or more than one-eighth of the total population of Ireland—it

has not begun at all. Most of the latter, of course, understand English, but Irish is the language of their common speech.

It was a few years ago, and to some extent still is, less of a transition to cross the Channel from England to Dublin than to cross the Bog of Allen from Dublin to the Western counties. In Dublin one could, and if one is a sufficiently superficial observer one still can, feel that he is in a country not vastly different from England—in “West Britain,” to employ the term which the enthusiasts of the Gaelic revival used as one of reproach for the attitude of those to whom English culture and tradition seemed superior to the native.

But, unless one is of those impregnable Englishmen who carry the atmosphere of beef and baths with them into the remotest parts of the earth, nobody could penetrate the districts of the Western and South-western Irish seaboard without realising that he was in a foreign country. And, if he were at all an imaginative person, he would realise that it was a very foreign country, with little in common not only with England, but with any part of Western Europe, except perhaps Brittany. For it is a matter which goes beyond language merely that the Irish were, in the words of M. d'Arbois de Jubainville, “le

seul rameau celtique qui ait échappé à la puissante et destructive influence de la domination romaine."

Despite the influence of the Gaelic League, in pre-Sinn Fein Ireland outside the *Gaeltacht*—the native Irish-speaking region—it was something of a social stigma, a mark of barbarianism, or at best a not very reputable eccentricity, to toy with the language movement or to take more than a casual interest in the revival of Irish-Ireland culture. Dublin, a typically provincial city priding itself upon its cosmopolitan culture, might be interested in the steppes of Russia, but the bogs of Mayo left it cold.

It was only later, when to speak Gaelic became a mark of distinction and education, that there was a fashionable rush to learn a language which, unfortunately, it requires long study and severe discipline to acquire. Most of the leaders of the Sinn Fein movement, the majority of whom are countrymen, not natives of Dublin, are Gaelic speakers; but I remember being impressed by Constance Markievicz one evening at Æ's (She is commonly known, by the way, as the "Countess" Markievicz, but the giant Casimir Markievicz, her husband, who, after many adventures in the war and the Russian Revolution, was when I last heard of him managing a theatre

in Warsaw, always rebutted the accusation of nobility). The view of this unexpected scion of the Gore-Booths, as she then expressed it, was that no busy person over twenty-five ought reasonably to be required to learn Gaelic. Coming from one whose devotion to the Republican cause was scarcely open to reproach, the remark was something of a snub for the not rare class of enthusiasts whose own sacrifices for the cause were attested by their pains to speak the Irish language in and out of season, and by little else.

But, when all is said, and full account is made of the silly excesses of some of the partisans of the language movement, it remains true that the essential mark of the time is the transition from the "West British" conception of Ireland which ruled in the days of the Nationalist Party, to the Irish-Ireland which was at once a cause and an effect of the rise of Sinn Féin. There was an extraordinary reversal of the tide of history which for centuries had pushed the native Irish culture further and further westwards before the advancing sweep of English influence from the east. Suddenly, as it appeared, all that flow which seemed irresistible spent itself, and there came an ebb which, carrying back all the paraphernalia of mercantalism and machine guns, brought out of the half-forgotten sunset lands a

strange figure, speaking an almost unknown tongue, and he bearing a pike. It seemed a sudden and inexplicable transformation ; but one is reminded of that story of Gaelic folk-lore, which you will meet in the pages of Fiona MacLeod, of the mystic ninth wave.

V.

If this development was little understood in England, still less was it comprehensible by the Unionist population of Belfast, that strangest of Western European cities which combines with all the virtues and most of the vices of the industrial revolution many of the vices and few of the virtues of the Middle Ages.

I say advisedly of Belfast, for the " Ulster problem " is in fact a Belfast problem. Not only in Tyrone and Fermanagh, which are more Nationalist than Unionist, and in Derry and Armagh, where the balance is the other way, but even in Antrim and Down, the two metropolitan counties of Ulster, the leaven of Nationalism leavens the lump of Ulster *Particularismus*. In the Glens of Antrim and in the promontories of Down you will find communities which are as " Irish-Irish " as those in any part of the three southern provinces. What is called Ulster

Unionism in fact consists in the existence in Belfast of a proletariat of which the majority retains the militant Protestantism of its ancestors, and whose leaders work upon that religious sentiment in the cause of what they conceive to be an economic conflict between urban and rural interests.

But the essential feature of Ulster Unionism, whatever it is, is that it is not Unionist. In the later phases of the Anglo-Irish quarrel that fact has been revealed in the exhibition of its strictly contingent loyalty to the British connection. "Ulster" in the political sense is loyal just in so far as loyalty pays, and no further.

If the outlook of Nationalist Ireland is strange to England, still more strange is that of Unionist Ulster. There was something anomalous in the former alliance of English Liberalism, with its strong tinge of Nonconformity, and the Nationalist Party representative of Catholic Ireland. But actually it was less paradoxical than the alliance between English Conservatism and Ulster Unionism. There was here superficially no difference in religion, it is true. In fact, however, there was nothing whatever in common between English Conservatism, with its easy-going Protestantism—and in which in fact English Catholicism is a strong element — and the

mediæval, fanatical Calvinism which is the mark of Belfast.

Surely one of the strangest chapters in British political history is that of the hypnotism exercised by Belfast over one of the historic English parties, until a British Coalition Government broke the spell and set itself to achieve the Irish settlement that Belfast had so long frustrated.

CHAPTER II

CALM AND STORM

A Disappointed Old Man—The Nationalist Party—John Redmond and John Dillon—What Might Have Been—The Professional Politician—Some Party Portraits—Memories of Tom Kettle—"Quel Beau Nez"—Alarums and Excursions—The Orange Drum—The Anonymity of Ulster—Carson and Craig—The Arming of the South—The Irish Volunteers—Colonel Maurice Moore—First Leaders of Sinn Fein—An Unfair Presentment—A Strange Figure—Roger Casement—The Curragh Crisis—Germany and Ireland—A Craigavon Sidelight.

I.

IN an old street of Georgian mansions in Dublin north of the Liffey lives a disappointed old man. Out of the traffic of O'Connell Street, that fine thoroughfare of the Irish capital which twice within six years has been fated to dissolve in flames into ruin, you turn into a dingy street of public houses and hucksters' shops, losing itself

in a vista of increasing squalor. Leftwards from this ascends a street climbing steeply uphill, flanked on either side by the tall and imposing houses which Georgian Dublin has left scattered here and there about the modern city. To-day here in North Great George's Street, as elsewhere, most of these mansions have fallen on evil days. They are a warren of tenements in which inhabits that dark underworld of Dublin which now and then, as in 1913, revolts against its vile conditions of life and demonstrates until the batons of the police club it back into its kennels again.

Grimy children of the type which the Dublin proletariat breeds in such reckless profusion play about the elaborate doorways of these decayed mansions. The roadway is a litter of dirt and refuse. Between the steep cliffs of the houses which climb the hillside little sunlight penetrates, and it seems a mockery that any should be here at all.

Georgian Dublin has gone while the poor of Dublin are always with us. It is a scene of decay in which nothing even of the picturesque remains to redeem it. But here and there, in this ill-favoured street, a handful of better-class residents cling to the old surroundings of a departed day. It is, one supposes, some sentiment which keeps

in tenancy here a stray doctor or solicitor, a business man or two.

There is something of appropriateness in such a setting for John Dillon, successor to John Redmond in the leadership of the Nationalist Parliamentary Party. When my recollection of Dublin begins that Party seemed as solidly rooted in the soil of Ireland as the Rock of Cashel itself. At the date, in 1918, when Dillon took over the leadership from Redmond, it was visibly tottering, but Dillon was still leader of a party of nearly eighty members with a strong organisation in the country behind it. A few months later John Dillon, without a seat himself, was titular leader of a party of half a dozen members, existing solely upon the sufferance of its Sinn Féin opponents.

Right down to the opening of the Irish Conference in London, if you could penetrate the gloomy house in North Great George's Street and induce John Dillon to talk to you about politics, he would tell you that, though he loyally accepted the verdict of the country for the time being, the sweeping success of Sinn Féin was only a temporary aberration, and Nationalist Ireland would in time return to its allegiance to the Parliamentary Party and the policy for which it stood.

It was a delusion pathetic in a man to whom politics were an all-sufficing interest and excitement, the very breath and meaning of his life, and who now in his old age, at the close of a career spent in the service of his country, found himself left on the shelf, a mere ghost lingering superfluous on the political scene. But it was a delusion extraordinary in a man who in some ways was in his time a far better judge of politics than ever John Redmond was.

The friend and colleague of Michael Davitt, who played an active part in the Land War and the "Plan of Campaign"; the sometime leader of the anti-Parnellites after the split; the man who himself had known the inside of a jail, was in many ways closer in touch with the political Ireland of his day than his predecessor in the Nationalist leadership. He was guilty of only one serious error of judgment of the first class, when, on the whole against the instinct of Redmond, he swung the Nationalist Parliamentary Party into opposition to the farmers' co-operation movement which gradually transformed the face of rural Ireland and in the process attracted the sympathy of the younger and more imaginative generation of Irishmen.

John Dillon, again, was always more anti-English in his leanings, and therefore closer to

the outlook of an insurgent generation, than the more austere and cautious Redmond. Before the rising of 1916, while Redmond opposed the British Government's fitful and ineffectual repressive measures on the ground that the revolutionary movement was weak enough to be ignored with safety—he dismissed the Sinn Feiners with astonishing ineptitude as “an insignificant handful of pro-Germans”—Dillon opposed the policy of the Irish Executive on the much more valid ground that the revolutionary movement was so strong that repression could only precipitate an outbreak. He was in his house in Dublin, in the centre of an insurgent district, during the rising, and he it was who at Westminster, against a furiously hostile House of Commons, excused if he did not defend the insurgents and bitterly assailed the methods adopted by the British Government for the suppression of the rising.

One would have supposed, then, that John Dillon would at least have understood the significance of the new movement even if he did not altogether approve it. There is no knowing how vastly different the history of Ireland during these last four or five years might have been if Dillon had elected to make common cause with the rising party of Sinn Fein, had combined with

its enthusiasm the political experience of his own, and had sought to restrain the more extreme elements in its policy. But with an extraordinary miscalculation of political forces, he chose instead to fight, thereby drawing upon his party the charge of Sinn Féin—a quite unfair charge—that it was too friendly to the British Government. So he ensured the downfall of the Nationalist Parliamentary Party and his own complete impotence during some of the most critical years in Irish political history. Perhaps the sufficient explanation of his attitude is that he was too old a man to enter into the ideals and aspirations of what was pre-eminently a party of youth.

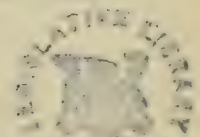
II.

Though I have been guilty of a biography of John Redmond, I must confess to no more than a slight acquaintance with the older generation of the Nationalist Party during this period. No one could meet Redmond without a feeling of respect for the many great qualities of one of the finest types of Irishmen, though enthusiasm was a sentiment which he did not inspire. No one could be a spectator of the clouded close of his life without being acutely sensible, if he had any imagination at all, of the almost Greek

element of tragedy in that life-story. No one, again, who ever came in contact with the ardent character and irrepressible humour of his brother "Willie," could fail to be moved by the circumstances in which this generous soul gave his life in the war in the vain hope of reconciliation between his country and England.

But, with some notable exceptions, it cannot be said that the members of the old Nationalist Party were a very attractive lot. Stephen Gwynn, in a review of my "Life" of Redmond especially kindly in view of the fact that he was at that time writing one of his own, dissents from a remark of mine that Redmond's "more gentle upbringing may have kept him aloof from many of his colleagues." Nobody, says Gwynn, chose his intimates with less reference to conventional standards, and he instances in this connection, Redmond's constant and close friendship with Pat O'Brien, for many years the exacting and beloved Whip of the Party, who was neither "gently brought up, nor gentle (except with children, and they adored him) and seven times never was he genteel."

I hope I never conveyed—nothing certainly was further from my thoughts—any impression that John Redmond was any kind of a snob. He was far too great a gentleman for that. But



he was a man of culture and wide human interests ; and, while it is true that he cared nothing for any man's social position, it is no less true that the majority of his colleagues in the latter days of the Nationalist Parliamentary Party were men, aside altogether from their birth, of little culture and the narrowest interests.

The second-rate professional politician, the party hack, is not in any country the most attractive of mortals, and Ireland is no exception to the general rule. It is—or at any rate was—a class little known in the Sinn Fein movement. For narrowness of outlook many of the less known and some of the best known figures in the Sinn Fein movement exceed the worst of the members of the older party ; but they at least were redeemed to some extent by an element of idealism which their predecessors notably lacked. The calibre of many of the rank and file of the old Party is, perhaps, sufficiently attested by the really pitable straits to which they found themselves reduced when their livelihood as professional politicians disappeared.

Among the younger members of the Nationalist Party—I use the word “ younger ” comprehensively, as descriptive rather of an outlook of mind than of actual years—one remembers very vividly the engaging personality of Tom Kettle.

By his death in the War, Ireland lost one of her most spirited sons, the party one of its strongest assets in a changing situation, and the social life of Dublin an inimitable *raconteur*. Kettle had one of those curious minds with a strong Catholic bias, and yet with a puckish kink of irreverence. He was deeply steeped in Gaelic legendary lore and yielded to none in his ardent love of it. Yet one of my most permanent recollections of him is of an evening at Laytown, near Dublin, during a week-end golfing party, when he kept us in a roar of laughter with a transliteration of the Cuchullain saga into golfing terms. The hero encounters a series of omens warning him of his impending doom, and I hear still the tones of Kettle describing the emotions of Cuchullain when he felt that "Fate was dormy two on him."

Kettle in some respects was a fore-runner of Sinn Fein. He held an absolute faith in the virtues of the old Gaelic culture and its persistence as shewn in the facility with which throughout the centuries Ireland absorbed her invaders. "Ireland," he wrote in "The Open Secret of Ireland," which, with a slender volume or two of essays and a sheaf of poems, makes up his too rare contribution to the literature of his time, "played Cleopatra to the Anthony of the invaders . . . There was never was a nation,

not even the United States, that so subdued and re-fashioned those who came to her shores, that so wrought them into her own blood and tissue. We came, we the invaders, to dominate, and we remained to serve. For Ireland has signed us with the oil and chrism of her human sacrament, and even though we should deny the faith with our lips, she would hold our hearts to the end."

"Ireland," he wrote again, "unvisited by the legions and the law of Rome, had evolved a different vision of the life of men in community, or, in other words, a different vision of the State. Put very briefly, the difference lay in this. The Romans and their inheritors organised for the purposes of war and order, the Irish for purposes of culture. The one laid the emphasis on police, the other on poets. . . . In a world in which right is little more than a secretion of might, in which, unless a strong man armed keeps house, his enemies enter in, the weakness of the Gaelic ideal is obvious. But the Roman pattern, too, had a characteristic vice which has led logically in our own time to a monster and sinister growth of armaments. To those who recognise in this deification of war the blackest menace of our day, the vision of a culture State is not without charm. The shattering possibilities enfolded in it would have fevered Nietzsche and fascinated Renan."

These words were written when the European War was no more than a vague menace. But in the faith in which they were written Tom Kettle died at Ginchy :

“ Know that we fools, now with the foolish
dead,
Died not for flag, nor King, nor Emperor ;
But for a dream born in a herdsman’s shed,
And for the secret Scripture of the poor.”

How richly, one feels, he would have revelled in the developments of these latter days. For it was always one of the strongest articles of his political creed to deny the validity of the suggestion that, in any treaty of political peace with England, Ireland should make as it were a formal act of humiliation, a repudiation of her history of rebellion and of her famous rebels. The verses of which he said, “ as political poetry, this may be open to amendment ; as poetic politics, it is sound, decisive, and answerable,” are very apposite to-day :

“ Bond, from the toil of hate we may not
cease ;
Free, we are free to be your friend.
But, when you make your banquet, and we
come,
Soldier with equal soldier must we sit,

Closing a battle, not forgetting it,

With not a name to hide.

This mate and mother of valiant rebels dead

Must come with all her history on her head.

We keep the past for pride,

Nor war nor peace shall strike our poets
dumb.

No rawest squad of all death's volunteers,

No simplest man who died

To tear your flag down, in the bitter years,

But shall have praise and three times thrice
again,

When, at that table, men shall drink with
men."

Just that touch of romantic vision, which put Tom Kettle in touch with the younger generation, is lacking in the political equipment of Stephen Gwynn, another member of the Party, in some respects akin to Kettle in training and outlook, with whom at a later date I came into some contact. Gwynn, who threw in his lot with the Home Rule movement, although a son of one of the most distinguished Unionist houses in Ireland, and, like Kettle, served in the war, never quite lost a certain element of Imperialism—even though at one time he had leanings towards the Sinn Fein point of view, and was a man in whom the ideas of the Gaelic League found one of their

most cultivated adherents. He had, perhaps, too logical and balanced a mind for a period of politics when, even more than usually in Ireland, emotion played a predominant part. He was one of the very few Irish politicians who were ready to face the realities of the Ulster opposition to self-government after the downfall of the Nationalist Parliamentary Party, and a tenacious advocate of the federal solution.

A handful of the more distinguished of what I have called the younger generation of the Party are still in politics in one capacity or another, and one or two may be expected, in a settled Ireland, to play a not unimportant part in the shaping of their country's destinies under self-government. Among those who presumably are definitely out of active political life, since they have undertaken other work which precludes political activity, mention should be made of Hugh Law, formerly member for one of the divisions of Donegal, and afterwards an official of the Local Government Board for Ireland. Sometime Irish collaborator to *The New Europe* and Irish correspondent of the *Round Table*, Hugh Law, a man of wide European sympathy, played during the past decade a part of some importance and distinction behind the scenes of Irish poetical life.

Among his less known gifts is something of a turn for facetious verse, as witness the following lines, inspired by somebody's remark in the House of Commons, *apropos* of what I have forgotten : " If the hon. member for Peckham were a poet—"

" If Peckham were a poet, or Ponsonby could
paint,
Though you or I might know it, our praise
were somewhat faint ;
If Carson were a chemist, or Redmond merely
wrote,
The fame of each polemist were dumb in
fortune's throat.
Since I became a member of Britain's
Parliament,
The chill of drear December is changed to
June's content.
Unheeded once I wended my humble,
humdrum way,
No one on earth attended to what I chose
to say.
But now our worthy Pressmen throng round
me day and night,
They all thrill more or less when I catch the
Speaker's sight.
The vulgar herd may utter lewd libels on
my nose,

The tailor and the cutter coldly condemn
my clothes.

With lofty toleration, such injuries I bear,
Paid by a grateful nation, four hundred
pounds a year."

Hugh Law's nose—need it be explained?—is of the breed of Cyrano de Bergerac ; and there is, in fact, no reason whatever to suppose that he ever required the consolation of " four hundred pounds a year " to be able to live up to it with equanimity.

III.

In the year or two immediately preceding the outbreak of war, most of the excitement of Irish politics was provided by the alarums and excursions in Ulster. These were the days when the Orangemen of Ulster, by the signature of the " Ulster Covenant," formed what a correspondent of the London *Times* very aptly called " an offensive and defensive alliance with Divinity." They were the days, too, when Nationalists exercised their humour at the expense of " Orange bluff." " Ces manifestations, d'aspect anachronique," says a French observer of the period, " soulevèrent un rire enorme en Irlande." They did ; but they raised something

else as well. They raised again the spectre, laid for many a year, in Irish politics, of physical force.

Looking back, one is struck very forcibly by one aspect of the Ulster movement. I mean its anonymity. It is perhaps in a sense a test of reality. The absence for a long period of outstanding names on the British side in the European War was regarded as a proof that it was peculiarly a people's war. Something of the same reasoning may be applied to the Ulster movement. Even if one concedes that the real strength of Unionist Ulster lay rather in the Tory drawing-rooms of London, than in the shipyards and factories of Belfast, still this anonymity of the movement is a considerable proof that there was something of reality back of it.

It is really an extraordinary element of the movement. Here was this affair, whereon was fixed the attention of England and of a large part of the outside world, of an industrial population in a corner of Ireland openly arming to defeat the constitutional will of the nation to which at the same time they swore undying loyalty. It was a movement which engaged the astonished eyes of Europe and America by its mixture of melodrama and farce. Yet, save for

the single dominating figure of Edward Carson, it produced not a solitary man whose name ever really became known outside the boundaries of his own province—and of that province Carson himself was not a native.

“*De mortuis*——.” Carson, since he shook the dust of Belfast battle off his feet, and accepted a British Law Lordship, is politically dead. His lonely solitude as the “strong man of Ulster” could not have been better proved than by the difficulty there was in finding a successor to him. All through the Ulster controversy Sir James Craig, the new Ulster leader and first premier of “Northern Ireland,” understudied Carson, but the accent was on the “under.” No sort of romantic glamour ever surrounded the prosaic personality of Craig, one of these Jameses who are born fated to be called “Jimmy.” In old days even more violent in speech than Carson, he rarely said things that rankled, and his bitterness was never personal. He lacks that gift of invective which Carson, in an admirable example of the pot abusing the kettle, once described in the case of a legal opponent, with his pronounced Dublin accent, as a capacity for “shpitting out dirrt by the yarrd.” Craig is one of those men who may have many opponents, but make few or no enemies.

To succeed the man who in Unionist Ulster inspired much the same fanatical devotion as did De Valera in Sinn Fein Ireland was a heavy heritage, and Craig would have been the last to claim that he owed it to much more than political accident. He knew very well that he exercised no such unquestioning authority among the Covenanters as Carson ; and perhaps the knowledge that he was suspect on the question of prohibition—there was a touch of comedy in the choice of one with large distilling interests to lead the “ unco guid ” of Presbyterian Ulster—induced him in his earliest days as leader to out-Carson his former chief in Nosurrenderism. Lacking altogether the dangerous quality of brilliancy, with industry perhaps as the chief feature in his make-up, Craig's elevation from the plodding politicians in the ruck of the Coalition to the Ulster leadership was maliciously explained by a personal friend in terms of the proverb, “ among the blind the one-eyed man is king.” Certainly all his colleagues were stamped with the hall-mark of provincialism.

Anonymity, too, was the outstanding characteristic of the rise of the National Volunteers, which were the spontaneous reply of Nationalist Ireland to the arming of Ulster. They appeared as it were overnight, under the technical direction

of Colonel Maurice Moore, brother of George Moore. It was in October, 1913, that some young Irishmen of the most diverse origins came together to consider the organisation of a national volunteer force, "destined to defend the rights and liberties of all Irishmen without distinction of belief, class or party." The chief promoter of the inaugural meeting in Dublin was John MacNeill, Professor of Old Irish History at the National University, a man who had hitherto taken little part in public affairs, but was known as a strong Nationalist of the constitutional sort.

Colonel Moore, late of the Connaught Rangers, was Inspector-General of the National Volunteers from their creation. He remained so in the case of the National, as distinct from the Irish Volunteers, when the split in the organisation came on the outbreak of war, and a section seceded from the leadership of John Redmond (who had first ignored and then acquired control of the Volunteers), owing to his attitude towards recruiting. After the split the National Volunteers rose to the height of their popularity with Irish Unionist Peers like Lords Powerscourt, Fingall, Conyngham and Arran taking commissions in them. But when the War Office cold-shouldered Irish recruiting, the National Volunteers

decayed. Maurice Moore, after a period of disillusionment in military service again, drifted towards Sinn Fein, and later in the days of the Terror enjoyed the distinction of being carried about the streets of Dublin in a military lorry as a hostage—an experience which gave him an opportunity of expressing, as a soldier himself, his opinion of the military *régime* in a public letter to Sir Nevil Macready, the Commander-in-Chief in Ireland.

The Royal Commission which enquired into the circumstances of the rising of 1916 refused to receive the evidence prepared by Colonel Moore. His evidence, however, remains the most interesting and best-informed document upon the rising. In it he thus described the composition of the original Volunteer committee : “ On my first entrance I found about twenty-five members present ; nearly all of them were young men, some merely boys of twenty, some seemingly less. Except Mr. John McNeill and Mr. Pearse and Mr. McDonagh, I had never seen or heard of any of them before, and it took me two or three days to size them up and separate the groups. There were about two extremists, and four or five boys under their domination ; these latter men were mild and quiet, and by no means unreasonable. Five or six Sinn Feiners were in

a separate group ; they might be described as extreme Home Rulers ; they did not approve of the methods of the Parliamentary Party, but were not revolutionists. . . . There were a few like McNeill, Pearse, McDonagh, Plunkett and O'Rahilly, who belonged to no political party ; they were idealists. The remainder of the Committee were moderate men, inclined to follow the Parliamentary Party. . . . It will be interesting to note how some of the Sinn Fein party and some of the idealists gradually became extremists and merged with the Fenians."

IV.

Though it was not till after the war broke out and the split came in the ranks of the Volunteers, that an appeal to arms by advanced Nationalists began to loom as a serious possibility, one recalls even in this earlier time certain portents. Most significant, of course, was the revolt of labour in Dublin, led first by James Larkin and then by James Connolly, who was executed after the 1916 rising ; but with the Irish Labour movement and its personalities, I propose to deal in a latter chapter.

Insurgent labour was one element in the rising. The other chief element was the influence of

those idealists turned Fenians to whom Colonel Moore referred in the passage quoted above. Patrick Pearse, Thomas MacDonagh and Joseph Plunkett were the leading spirits of these. None was a figure in public, or even in what there was of social life in Dublin. Pearse, a schoolmaster—though, it is very true, no ordinary schoolmaster—MacDonagh, a competent man of letters, Plunkett, an amateur of the arts; all were members of one of the small coteries into which the social life of Dublin was at this time split up. A bitter caricature of the circle, but with some elements of truth, is to be found in the pages of Eimar O'Duffy's novel "The Wasted Island." O'Duffy, himself a Volunteer, was a partisan of John MacNeill, who issued the order cancelling the general mobilisation. It was this action of MacNeill's which, in Pearse's view, condemned the rising to failure, but with a fine generosity Pearse admitted that MacNeill issued it in what he thought to be the best interests of Ireland.

It is this element of personal nobility in all the idealist leaders of the rising that makes unfair Eimar O'Duffy's presentment of them, which it would scarcely be too much to call that of a set of vain neurotics. Certainly Pearse and Plunkett appear to have been haunted by the idea that the Irish cause demanded a blood sacrifice;

but that mystical conception is interwoven in the whole tradition of Irish revolutionary history. Pearse, author of the Montessori-like, but highly individual educational experiment at his school at St. Enda's, that fine old house and park at Rathfarnham near Dublin, which "began as a pastoral idyll, and finished as a fiery epic under the burning ruins of the Dublin Post Office"; MacDonagh, who, for all his Gaelic enthusiasm, was one of the company, though below the accomplishment, of Yeats, George Russell, James Stephens and Synge, in his belief in the case for the existence of a real Anglo-Irish literature; Plunkett, who showed an admirable judgment in his choice of contributors to the now defunct *Irish Review* (one of whom was Grace Giffard, a talented artist and sister of Mrs. MacDonagh, whom he married in his condemned cell on the eve of execution)—these were men whose lives and deaths deserved the generosity of even those critics who could not share the judgment of Maurice Moore, that they would have been "the fine flower of any nation."

With one exception, the leaders of the insurrection of 1916 were not widely known within Ireland, and quite unknown outside. Roger Casement, alone, in some ways the strangest figure in the movement, had some reputation

in the wider world. Comparatively small events often sway the destinies of men, and I believe that what finally swung Casement over to the physical force side was the question of the Queenstown call of Transatlantic liners which arose a year or so before the war. He was then just retiring from the diplomatic service, after his return from Rio de Janeiro, where in the Putomayo rubber investigation he had carried on his humanitarian work begun some years before in connection with the Congo atrocities. This was the year after the appearance of the famous *Irish Review* article, published anonymously but almost certainly from Casement's pen, which discussed the position and prospects of Ireland in the "next war"; but the question then was still academic, and the probability is that Casement had not yet definitely thrown in his lot with the revolutionaries.

He was at this time a frequent visitor to the office of the *Irish Times*, of whose editorial staff I was then a member, in connection with the Queenstown call affair. The Cunard Company, following the example of the White Star Line, decided to abandon the use of the Southern Irish harbour as a port of call for mails and passengers, on the plea that the roadstead was unsafe for large liners. Ireland would thus be

left without any connection with the outside world by the chief steamship services. Casement, always impressed by Ireland's disadvantageous position as "an island beyond an island," at once entered into negotiations with the Hamburg-Amerika Line for the inauguration by that Company of a service which would make the Queenstown call.

The scheme—which was warmly supported by the *Irish Times*, the chief Unionist organ—eventually broke down, because, as Casement argued, of the pressure which the Cunard Co. had been able to induce the British Government to apply at Berlin. Incidentally it had brought him into close relations with Herr Ballin, the Hamburg-Amerika head, and a personal friend and confidant of the Kaiser, and thus perhaps helped to pave the way for his subsequent activities in the German war prison camps, in his ill-fated attempt to raise an "Irish Brigade."

I remember well the extreme bitterness with which he spoke of England's part in this affair. It was to him the final proof of British selfishness and indifference to Irish interests wherever they clashed with those, real or supposed, of English mercantilism. Later, when he landed from a submarine, and was captured in Ireland, on the eve of the Easter Week of 1916—he had gone to

Germany before the war to arrange for the purchase of arms for the Volunteers, and was in America when war broke out—I at once connected this dramatic reappearance with the earlier cause of anger against England of this polished, Vandyke bearded cosmopolitan, who looked so little like the type of Irish revolutionary.

Another memory of Casement, and one of some importance for a proper estimate of the influence of Irish affairs in bringing about the European war, stands out. It was in Ulster at the time of the "Curragh crisis," that sinister incident which played so large a part in the development of Irish opinion, when certain high officers of crack cavalry regiments at the Curragh made it clear that they would refuse to march to Ulster, and beat the British Government on the question. Casement, who was staying with F. J. Biggar, the well-known Irish antiquary, was a frequenter of the Grand Central Hotel, where were congregated journalists of all nationalities, eager to reach an understanding of the paradoxical situation which had arisen as a consequence of the Larne gun-running.

He cultivated particularly the very able representative of the *Berliner Tageblatt*, who had come post-haste to Ireland to report on the progress of the "revolution." Citing the Queenstown

call case, Casement argued to him that England had always, and would always, oppose the industrial development of Ireland. Casement was anxious to have an interview with Carson, believing that the "Ulster question" was capable of peaceful settlement by Irishmen themselves if the British Government would keep out of it; and he and the German correspondent went off together to Craigavon, the Ulster leader's headquarters. Casement did not get his interview, but the German, as a special favour, was permitted to pass the gates, guarded by armed sentries, of Craigavon.

Whether his earlier talk with Casement influenced his judgment or not, he returned to Belfast to write for his paper a humorous despatch on Ulster. "Carson and Craig will not fight," he said. The little incident is worth recalling in view of the fact that certain too fervent admirers of Carson suggested that the Ulster leader took upon himself the responsibility of deceiving German journalists as to the true state of things in Ireland; and thereupon certain of his too zealous opponents have built an elaborate theory that by causing Germany to think that England would be powerless to intervene owing to the Irish trouble, Carson was chiefly responsible for the war. It is doubtless

a legend not unpleasing to the vanity of Carson ; but historical accuracy compels the correction that he had, in fact, little or nothing, in any but the most indirect sense, to do with precipitating the European War, wherein not the least dramatic incident was the rising of 1916 in Ireland.

CHAPTER III.

PRESS CUTTINGS.

The Rising of 1916—Journalism Under Difficulties—The Dublin Press—The “ Irish Times ” and Southern Unionism—The Mansion House Meeting—Conservatives in Strange Company—The Aristocratic Tradition—Where Credit is Due—The “ Freeman’s Journal ”—The “ Irish Independent ”—A New Chapter in Newspaper History—Trial by Courtmartial—The Freedom of the Press—A Great Irishman—Horace Plunkett—The Irish Convention—The Rise of Sinn Fein—“ The Irish Statesman ”—Towards a Middle Party—Through Agony to Settlement.

I.

To sit in one’s office and assist in producing a newspaper in a city whose social and economic life is completely paralysed, and where the crack of rifles, the roar of bursting bombs, the whine and crash of shell-fire and all the confused uproar of street-fighting replace the normal rumble of street traffic, is an experience which

falls to the lot of few but Irish journalists. To them it was to become something of a commonplace after their first taste of such conditions during the rising of 1916.

The rising began on Easter Monday, the 24th of April. It ended on Saturday, the 29th, with the surrender of the nucleus of the insurgent forces holding the General Post Office as their headquarters. Up to and including the Thursday the *Irish Times*, sole survivor of the Dublin newspapers, published a daily edition. Owing to mechanical difficulties—which in point of fact coincided with a situation in which distribution had become altogether impossible—it had then to suspend publication until the following Monday, when it reappeared before its contemporaries, out of action for a whole week, were in a position to resume.

All of the Dublin newspapers at that time depended for their motive power upon the city gas supply, which, as a measure of precaution, was cut off during the rising. In the *Irish Times* office we were fortunate in the possession of an antiquated emergency suction gas plant, which was induced to operate, and with infinite pains was kept in being till the Thursday of Easter Week, when it finally sat down and could not be persuaded to function any further.

The issues of the paper produced during this time remain among the curiosities of journalism. First, Dublin Castle was not disposed to let us publish at all. Then the authorities agreed that we might appear if we carried no more than the official proclamations and *communiqués*. All independent descriptions of the rising or comment upon it was strictly barred. So, with all the telegraph wires down and the telephone service monopolised by the authorities, and therefore with no news of any kind from outside Dublin available, we produced by the light of candles some curious newspapers, consisting of single sheets, which contained the bald and very reticent official version of the situation, and nothing at all else except sheer padding.

The office of the *Irish Times* in Westmoreland Street lay in the No Man's Land between Trinity College, held first by its O.T.C., and later occupied by military forces, and the insurgent outposts in the houses commanding O'Connell Bridge from the north side of the Liffey. Within the office, where the handful of the staff who were able to get in at all lived during the three or four days in a state of siege, with occasional sallies at dusk and dawn for food, we had admirable opportunity of observing at first hand the operations of the opposed forces. Visiting

journalists told me afterwards that they witnessed a good deal of promiscuous sniping on the insurgent side, but this was not our experience.

The insurgents certainly had no reason to be fond of the *Irish Times* ; but they made no use of their numerous chances of picking off members of its staff. The fate of a plate-glass window neatly smashed by a bullet two inches above my head, I have always attributed to a regrettable accident. The military forces, parties of whom several times searched the office in endeavours to dislodge a persistent insurgent sniper, who kept cropping up on the roof, and was responsible for several military casualties, seemed to be much more " jumpy " than their opponents—and small wonder, considering that most of them were very young, untrained troops, thrown suddenly into a particularly nerve-racking variety of fighting. To this cause was due most of the excesses which admittedly occurred in connection with the suppression of the rising.

II.

Dublin at this time possessed four daily papers and three evening, the latter being run in connection with the former. The Nationalist *Freeman's Journal* and *Irish Independent* and the

Unionist *Irish Times* are still more or less flourishing properties, but the *Daily Express*, at one time, under the editorship of T. P. Gill, subsequently secretary of the Department of Agriculture, an excellent literary paper, has ceased publication. Long the property of Lord Ardilaun, it lost ground rapidly after his death owing to its continued advocacy of the lost cause of Diehard Irish Unionism.

More fortunate was the *Irish Times*, on whose editorial staff I was lucky enough to gain my first experience in Irish journalism, under John E. Healy, its able Editor and Irish Correspondent of the London *Times*. Under his control, the inevitable coming of self-government for Ireland was foreseen, and the paper bent its efforts towards educating its Unionist constituency into an acceptance of the situation which, when self-government did come, would enable Southern Unionists to play their part in the new Ireland. It was at this time the most secure newspaper property in Ireland, and might have been regarded as a national paper in the same sense as the *Scotsman*, aside from the fact that in Ireland the deep cleavage in politics had thrown the bulk of the wealth of the country into the hands of the anti-national party.

The prosperity of the *Irish Times*, however,

dated from the time when, owing to the Parnell split, Dublin journalism, so far as the Nationalist papers were concerned, degenerated into a slanging match between the rival factions which sent many of their readers elsewhere ; and it always retained, by its moderation and the comparative superiority of its general news services, a large proportion of Nationalist readers.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of the influence of the *Irish Times*, under Healy's editorship, upon the development of the Irish political situation. Lord Midleton, formerly St. John Broderick, the leader of Irish Southern Unionism, it will be remembered, played a large part at the Dublin Mansion House meeting, whereto he and other representative Irishmen were invited by De Valera after Lloyd George's invitation to London, in arranging the truce which paved the way for the London Conference. One of the most vivid memories of that dramatic time is of Midleton, Andrew Jameson, and other leading Irishmen of the most conservative tradition closeted with De Valera and other leaders of Sinn Fein in the Mansion House, while in the street outside, a dense crowd chanted quietly the strains of the rebel "Soldier's Song," not openly sung in Dublin for some eighteen months before. One

wondered what exactly were the feeling of these conservative gentlemen, as through the windows of the Mansion House floated the seditious airs of the crowd which was soon to cheer the arrival of Sir Nevil Macready, the Commander-in-Chief in Ireland, to arrange for the signature of the truce.

It must have been a strange experience for Midleton and his colleagues, but the situation was not so paradoxical as might appear. That they should find themselves thus in line at the critical moment with national sentiment was not surprising to those who had had occasion to follow their political evolution. That evolution dated back to the introduction of the Asquith Home Rule Bill, and the Ulster movement of resistance. Southern Irish Unionists—or some of them at least—hitherto content to follow the lead of Ulster Unionism on all political questions, began to see that Ulster Unionism was purely self-centred, and cared not at all for the interests of the Southern Unionists, where they conflicted with its own. From that time a few of the more far-seeing minds in Southern Unionism began to think nationally, to ask themselves whether their true interests did not lie with Nationalism rather than with a Unionism which used them only as worthless pawns in the political game.

The aristocratic tradition of leadership, forgotten since the days of Grattan's Parliament, stirred from its sleep.

For that awakening, a large part of the credit belongs to the *Irish Times*, and much of it to R. J. Herbert Shaw, now a member of the editorial staff of the London *Times*, who worked in close co-operation with John Healy. Herbert Shaw, a young Irishman of the land-owning class, as secretary of the Irish Unionist Alliance, the Southern Unionist organisation, was a silent but strong influence in mellowing the obscurantist policy of that body of opinion. Carefully shepherded by the *Irish Times*, which reacted a little towards an unconstructive Imperialism during the war, and especially in connection with the Irish conscription controversy, but maintained on the whole a consistently liberal policy, Southern Irish Unionism under the leadership of Midleton underwent a progressively rapid development. When finally its most intelligent and wealthiest elements, if not numerically the largest section, broke away from the Irish Unionist Alliance, and founded the Unionist Anti-Partition League, its evolution towards Nationalism was already all but complete.

When the full history of the time comes to be written, the contribution of the left wing of

Irish Southern Unionism towards the final settlement will receive its proper credit. The influence of this section of Irish opinion is not to be measured merely in terms of its place in the public life of Ireland. Much more important was the influence which, by its political affiliations with English Conservatism, it exercised upon the wider development of Anglo-Irish politics. Its decisive breach with Ulster Unionism, and with the rump of Southern Unionism which was content to be dragged at the heels of the Belfast chariot, was a factor of the utmost consequence in swinging British political opinion against Irish Diehardism, and in breaking down the traditional opposition of the House of Lords to Irish self-government.

III.

Simply because they were the organs of the majority, and therefore found it easier to follow than to attempt to lead their public, it is doubtful whether the two Nationalist newspapers in Dublin exercised proportionally as much influence as did the *Irish Times*. Still their reactions to the changing political conditions of the times are a field in any study of the development of the Irish situation which cannot be ignored.

The *Freeman's Journal*, a famous old foundation dating back to 1763, with which I was latterly for a few months connected as Magazine Editor, became, after the healing of the Parnell split, the official organ of the reunited Nationalist Party. It was for a period of twenty years under the editorship of W. H. Brayden, the *doyen* of leading Irish journalists, and now the Irish Correspondent of the Associated Press of America. With the decline of the Parliamentary Party it fell on lean days, aided a little, when payment of members was introduced, by the grant of subsidies towards its expenses out of their salaries, by those members of the Party who could afford it. It had to face the bitter competition of the halfpenny *Irish Independent*, controlled by William Martin Murphy, a member of the Cork group including also T. M. Healy, which carried on a continuous flank attack on the official Nationalists.

Unkind critics of the *Independent* described its policy as one which went half-way with everybody and then went home. It contrived to combine support of the war and recruiting with vigorous attacks on the Irish Administration and the Nationalist Party. It was savage in its condemnation of the rising of 1916, chiefly on account of the participation in it of insurgent

Dublin Labour, of which Murphy, leader of the Dublin employers in the great strike of a few years before, was the inveterate enemy. His newspaper, when the fate of James Connolly, badly wounded during the rising and a prisoner in British hands, was in the balance, clamoured for the execution of the Labour leader, and was largely instrumental in getting him executed—an aberration which it took it a long time to live down with its Sinn Fein readers. But, his private grudge satisfied, Murphy continued his intricate game of undermining the Nationalist Party, carefully confining himself to a purely destructive criticism, and as carefully avoiding committing the paper to Sinn Fein.

But when finally the Nationalist Parliamentary Party disappeared, and Sinn Fein and the British Government were left face to face, the rôles of the two Nationalist papers were to some extent reversed. The death of William Martin Murphy left the *Independent* with no outstanding personality in its directing and editorial staffs, and as the conflict between the British Government and Sinn Fein became more and more intense, the policy of the paper became in proportion more timid. Its policy, or lack of policy, enabled the rival *Freeman's Journal* to resume something like its old position in the national life.

The older Nationalist paper, brought to liquidation by the downfall of the Parliamentary Party, whose organ it was, took a new lease of life at the beginning of 1919, under a new control wherein Hamilton Edwards and Martin Fitzgerald joined forces to run it as an independent Nationalist paper. Like the *Independent*, the *Freeman's Journal* was an advocate of Dominion Home Rule, not Sinn Fein ; but, at a time when constructive policy was necessarily largely in abeyance, its criticism of British policy in Ireland and its support within very wide limits of Sinn Fein were outspoken and fearless.

Under the managing editorship of Harry Newton Moore, a Canadian journalist, who introduced many American features in its make-up, and the editorship of Patrick J. Hooper, formerly its London correspondent, with Robert Donovan, a Professor in the National University, and James Winder Good, an Ulsterman formerly on the Belfast *Northern Whig* and author of some illuminating books on Irish politics, as their principal assistants from the earlier staff, the paper became a force whose news "beats" won it international reputation. It was in frequent conflict with the British authorities, was once suppressed and often raided, and added a chapter to newspaper history of which the following

story, contributed to the *New York Tribune*, of which I was then Irish Correspondent, is perhaps worth reproducing at some length :

“ The scene is a cold, grey, oblong room, pierced by eight windows, four at each side. At one end is the stage, at the other a refreshment bar ; for the room in the Royal Barracks is commonly used for the entertainment of soldiers. Its furniture, rearranged for the occasion, is unchanged ; on bare boards stand gouty tables, covered with frowzy cloth and the cheapest of chairs. Later, thanks to the protests of representatives of the Press of half Europe and America, the scene shifts to a more commodious room in the Old Courthouse at Kilmainham. But here in these tawdry surroundings a unique trial opens. All these Pressmen, American, British, Continental, are gathered together for attend a new departure in the history of the Press—the first trial of a newspaper by court-martial.”

“ This trial is of great interest not only in itself. It is of interest also for the sidelights it throws on the state of Ireland. One has here, indeed, in this indictment of a national newspaper by the Crown, represented by a military tribunal, an epitome of the present state of the country. On the one side is a disaffected people, whose

cause relies, ultimately, upon the pressure of public opinion ; on the other is a government which depends, admittedly, on force of arms."

"The defendants are the *Freeman's Journal*, the oldest national newspaper, its two directors, and its editor. The directors are Hamilton Edwards (at one time associated with Lord Northcliffe), not an Irishman by birth, though his colours have long been known on Irish racecourses, and Martin Fitzgerald, bearer of an ancient Norman-Irish name, a well-known Dublin merchant. These two acquired the paper in 1919, and have controlled it as a persistent and outspoken critic of the British Government's Irish policy ; its own policy, however, is not Republican, but favours Dominion Home Rule. The editor is P. J. Hooper, lately returned from the Imperial Press Conference in Canada."

"Counsel appear on either side. For the Crown, Cecil Forde, moved by sinister suggestions in the English Press that all persons appearing in court, except for the defence, run the risk of assassination, takes early occasion to make it clear that counsel on either side appear simply as members of the Irish Bar, discharging the duties of their briefs. For the defence appears Tim Healy, most famous of Irish advocates, who has figured in every *cause célèbre*, political

or criminal, heard in Ireland in recent years. There is a certain piquancy in his brief for this side ; for Mr. Healy in the British Parliament, up to 1918, was a foremost member of the dissident Nationalist group which criticised at every turn the Nationalist Parliamentary Party, of which the *Freeman's Journal* was then, as for many years past, the official organ, and his closest political friend was the late William Martin Murphy, proprietor of the rival Dublin Nationalist paper, the *Irish Independent*. Tim Healy confesses during the proceedings that the *Freeman's Journal*, which he now defends, has not entered his house in twenty years."

"The famous advocate is in a sense himself on trial in these proceedings. Normally, his best assets are an amazing gift of eloquence in appeals to emotion, political or other, and a genius for putting witnesses under cross-examination through a process not very far removed from the Third Degree. Irish judges, it may be remarked, allow counsel a licence which is not permitted in an English court. But before this tribunal these resources will not serve Mr. Healy. Here he must be temperate and correct before all else. He rises admirably to the occasion. No point in the case for the

Crown to which he can object escapes him. No test of a witness under cross-examination is missed. But always he is the essence of suavity, and at the end the President of the Court compliments him warmly on his conduct of the defence."

"The president and six other officers constituting the courtmartial are anonymous in the reports of the trial in the daily Press. Such anonymity, sinister sign of the times, is the rule in all courtmartials, with wisdom, as the events of Dublin's "Bloody Sunday," a month or so ago, sufficiently showed. But on this anonymity in this case, as will appear, hung a sequel."

"The *Freeman's Journal* stands charged under the Restoration of Order in Ireland Act, the coercion measure recently passed by the British Parliament, with publishing false statements and statements likely to cause disaffection. There are two charges. One concerns the publication of a local report that two constabulary men shot dead at Tullow, in a county bordering on Dublin, were shot not by gunmen, but by Black and Tans. The other concerns the publication of the story of a Sinn Fein prisoner, a young man by the name of Quirke, to the effect that, while held in Portobello Barracks, he was flogged by Black and Tans, together with a photograph

of his back after the alleged flogging. A third charge, concerning the report of the shooting of a young man by Black and Tans in brutal circumstances, was withdrawn by the Crown before the trial."

"At the outset, to the customary question whether there is objection to any of the officers constituting the courtmartial, Mr. Healy replies that there is none to them personally, but there is objection to the trial of a newspaper by courtmartial and not as in England, before a jury, as an unconstitutional invasion of the liberty of the Press. The president politely overrules the objection. Mr. Healy proceeds to demand formal acquittal on the withdrawn charge, arguing that the veracity of the paper, impugned but now admitted in respect of this charge, clearly affects the remaining charges. The court notes the argument and proceeds with the first charge. Witnesses, mostly police, are called for prosecution and defence."

"The defence directs its case to showing that the local report published was actually a report current, published in good faith and without malice, and that there was foundation for it. Mr. Healy finally summarises his observations in ten points. . . . This skilfully built-up defence fails altogether to convince the

court-martial, but it acquits the accused on the graver counts of the charge, and finds them guilty only of publishing a report which is false and likely to cause disaffection. Suspending sentence on this charge, the court-martial proceeds to hear the second charge, concerning the alleged flogging in Portobello Barracks."

"Now occurs an extraordinary *contretemps*. To prove a state of indiscipline in the barracks, evidence is called relating to an earlier unsavoury episode, which revealed the presence of women in the barracks, in which a sergeant drank himself mad, and shot two of his comrades. During this evidence a member of the court-martial makes an interjection. It appears that he is an officer of the regiment concerned stationed in the barracks. Instantly Mr. Healy objects to the constitution of the court. In reply to the argument of Crown counsel, that objection should have been taken earlier, he says that in the circumstances the defence waived objection at the outset; but he objects definitely to the presence of this officer. After consultation with General Headquarters, the objection is upheld, the court dissolved, and a new court constituted."

"There is in this second case a direct conflict of evidence. Military witnesses prove that the prisoner Quirke was under observation of the

barrack guard during the night of the alleged flogging, and was well treated. Quirke in the witness-stand, under severe cross-examination, adheres to his story that he was flogged. He is supported by expert medical evidence, and by that of the photographer who photographed his back."

"Despite this corroborative evidence, the court rejects Quirke's story, but finds that the *Freeman's Journal* published it in good faith. The verdict, as in the first case, is that of guilty on the less serious count of spreading a report false and likely to cause disaffection. Without promulgation of sentence, the accused, despite the protests of counsel, are taken into military custody and lodged in Mountjoy Jail. The defence threatens *Habeas Corpus* application in the King's Bench for their release. On the eve of application, sentence on the first charge is promulgated. The two directors—the editor was dismissed on this charge owing to absence in Canada—are sentenced to six months' imprisonment, and the *Freeman's Journal* to a fine of £500. One may take leave to doubt, however, if the last has yet been heard of one of the most remarkable of political trials."

The doubt was justified. On the second charge, Edwards and Fitzgerald, this time with

Hooper along with them, were sentenced to another six months' imprisonment, and the paper fined £2,000. But owing to the protests of a large part of the British Press, irrespective of party, the three prisoners were soon released on the excuse of ill-health, and the fines, though not remitted, were never paid. The *Freeman's Journal* had won a signal victory for the principle of the liberty of the Press, and its popularity in Ireland at this time was unbounded. Afterwards, however, Hamilton Edwards relinquished control, and the property, though nominally remaining in the hands of Martin Fitzgerald, passed under the active management of his nephew, Dr. James MacDonnell, an amateur in whose hands the future of the paper is more doubtful.

IV.

Journalism principally brought me in touch with Sir Horace Plunkett, a great Irishman who has influenced, in one way or another, a large proportion of young men who have worked for or in Ireland, and has left the impress of his personality upon the Ireland of his time ; and it is one of my most pleasant memories of Ireland to have been associated with his one venture in journalism, the *Irish Statesman*. In a latter

chapter, I shall have something to say of his work in connection with the co-operative movement, with which his name will always be most closely associated. But on the *Irish Statesman* it was rather as politician than as economist that he figured.

For a considered estimate of Plunkett's influence on the Ireland of his generation, the curious may be referred to the book, "Sir Horace Plunkett and his place in the Irish Nation," by Edward E. Lysaght, a Nationalist of the new generation who is likely to play a part of some note in the free Ireland of the future. Alike as a Sinn Féiner who has stood aside from political action—he showed his independence both by accepting a seat as a Government nominee in the Irish Convention, and by resigning from that body when its hope of usefulness seemed to him to have passed—as a co-operator who on his own large farm in County Clare has put individual ideals of his own into practice, and as a Gaelic enthusiast saved from narrowness by his English upbringing, Lysaght is an uncommon type in Ireland ; and his book on Plunkett is an admirable monograph by a sympathetic though detached observer. For myself, I can pretend to contribute no more than a fragmentary impression, based on personal contact.

Though he has an itch to be in politics, which it seemed sometimes that he must satisfy even at the sacrifice of his more permanent interests, at the same time it is still in a sense true to say that Plunkett went in politics against his will. He has never been an orthodox politician since he sat for a short time as Unionist member for South Dublin, when he earned the enduring distrust of the extremists of his party, but won the confidence of Balfour and the leaders of English Conservatism. Certainly it was not as an orthodox politician that, the year after his establishment of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society, he summoned the Recess Committee, which led to the creation of the Irish Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, of which he was Vice-President from 1899 to 1907.

One has a feeling that all his subsequent political activity was coloured by the success of the quite unique experiment of the Recess Committee. On that committee leaders of the Irish Unionist and Nationalist Parties, peers, and men of business, the Grand Master of the Orange Order and a Jesuit priest, came together. As Erskine Childers put it in "The Framework of Home Rule," "during a short period, these men had in fact Home Rule, and, thanks to that

privilege, they did in six months a better work for Ireland than had been done for two centuries before."

But it was an experiment incapable of repetition. Within a short time all the accord reached in the Recess Committee had fallen to pieces. A few years afterwards many Unionists had withdrawn their support from the work of agricultural regeneration, the Nationalist Party under the influence of John Dillon was in active opposition to co-operation, and the Department of Agriculture, created to work in harmony with the I.A.O.S., was, under the direction of T. W. Russell, bending all its efforts to hamper the work of the Plunkett House.

This tragic finish to an undertaking so promisingly begun, however, does not appear to have affected Plunkett's belief, deriving from the Recess Committee, that the way to political peace in Ireland lay through conference. From an independent position outside politics, he devoted much activity, largely behind the scenes, to the consummation of that hope. It seemed to be realised when, a year after the rising of 1916, the British Government summoned the Irish Convention, and the Convention, at its first meeting in Trinity College, unanimously elected Plunkett as its Chairman.

His conduct in the Chair was subsequently the subject of much comment, some laudatory, some critical. His own version of it is told partly in his covering letter to Lloyd George in forwarding the official report of the Convention, more fully in his "secret" record of the proceedings of the Convention, which sat behind closed doors, but with many ears at the key-hole. Malicious rumour in Dublin had it that Plunkett might be observed asking tram-conductors whether they had seen his "secret" report to the King—a pleasing fantasy, somewhat marred by the fact that he is never seen in the streets of the Irish Capital except at the steering-wheel of his own car.

After the Government's proposal, simultaneously with the presentation of the Convention's report, to apply conscription to Ireland had torpedoed any possibility of good resulting from its sittings, Plunkett's next intervention in public affairs was not directly political, though it led him eventually into the political arena. In the autumn of 1918, at the time of the Armistice, he founded a new body known as the Irish Reconstruction Association, with which I was connected as Press secretary. Established in recognition of the fact that Ireland, owing to her absorption in political affairs to the exclusion

of economic and social questions, was perhaps more unprepared to meet post-war conditions than any other country in Europe, it was hoped that the association might come to do for Irish industry what the co-operative movement, with its machinery of inquiry and organisation, had done for Irish agriculture. It was a fact that in regard to organisation on modern lines, Irish industry was in a backward state as Irish agriculture before the intervention of the I.A.O.S.

Founded to protect the interests of Ireland as an economic and social unit during the period of reconstruction, the Association had no politics except that, on non-political grounds, it held that any sound scheme of Irish reconstruction were necessarily incompatible with the political partition of the country. A firm opposition to the separation of Unionist Ulster from the rest of Ireland was always a cardinal point of Plunkett's political faith. But it soon became apparent that an attempt to run such an association on non-political lines could not be sustained.

The association had been founded on the eve of the General Election of 1918, which in Ireland resulted in the sweeping of ninety *per cent.* of the constituencies by the candidates of Sinn Fein. At the beginning of the following year the elected

members met and constituted themselves *Dail Eireann*. So sudden, apparently, had been the change from the ascendancy of the Nationalist Parliamentary Party to the triumph of Sinn Fein that various sections of opinion which were leaning more and more towards the Left, but were not traditionally Nationalist, could not at once realise that the tide of a new political era, submerging all the old landmarks, had broken in Ireland. Though it was already apparent that no constructive work of any consequence could well be done by bodies outside the British Government and Sinn Fein alike, the conflict between them had not yet reached the stage of open violence, and it was still believed in some quarters that there was room at the time in Anglo-Irish politics for platforms built out of the older materials of compromise and persuasion.

For Plunkett it was, at the same time, a remarkable breach with his political past when, in the summer of 1919, he took a definite place in politics by his appearance as president of the Irish Dominion League, whose creation was announced in the first issue of the *Irish Statesman*, a political and literary weekly paper modelled on the English weeklies which was in a sense the organ of the League. Much negotiation had preceded the birth of the paper and the organisa-

tion whose policy it advocated. As well as the Irish Reconstruction Association, there existed in Ireland in the spring of 1919 two other bodies working on more or less parallel lines. One was Midleton's Unionist Anti-Partition League, Unionist in little but name, which, apart from opposing the political partition of Ireland by the exclusion of Ulster from any Home Rule Bill and working discreetly for a settlement, was also devoting some attention to Irish economic and social problems.

Another was the Irish Centre Party, founded by Stephen Gwynn for the reason, among others, that, as he frankly admitted, he did not want to be out of politics. The Irish Centre Party, which again laid much emphasis on economic and social affairs as well as on the larger political problem, proposed to reconcile Irish unity and Ulster separatism by a federal system under which there would be an All-Ireland Parliament and provincial assemblies for Ulster, for Munster, and for Leinster and Connacht together.

This scheme did not profess to be original. It was a modification of one put forward earlier in the form of a draft Bill entitled "Proposals for an Irish Settlement," published anonymously by "Two Irishmen." The Two Irishmen were Cruise O'Brien, then a member of the Plunkett

House staff as Librarian of the Co-operative Reference Library, who afterwards became my assistant in the editorship of the *Irish Statesman* and secretary of the Irish Dominion League, and is now on the editorial staff of the *Irish Independent*; and Diarmuid Coffey, also a member of the Plunkett House staff and later Librarian there.

The three bodies—Plunkett's, Gwynn's, and Midleton's—were each small in numbers separately, though of more account in influence, but it seemed that, if they could join forces, they had together the makings of a strong political organisation. Negotiations to this end were set on foot during the spring of 1919 while Plunkett was away in the United States, and at a series of informal meetings, arranged by a Dublin physician and attended by Stephen Gwynn, Cecil Fforde and Simon Maddock for the Midletonians, and Cruise O'Brien and myself, the possibilities of common action were discussed.

In the end it proved impossible to bring in the Midleton group. They were wholly sympathetic, but took the view, in which they may or may not have been right, that they could play a more useful part in affairs if they did not at this point declare themselves too definitely on the

Nationalist side. A basis of agreement was reached, however, between the views of Gwynn and Plunkett, and the Irish Centre Party of the former and the Irish Reconstruction Association of the latter merged in the Irish Dominion League. The most formidable obstacle proved to be the dislike of Plunkett to committing himself on the question of the treatment of Ulster, as to which Gwynn held strongly the view that the policy of the Centre Party ought to be adopted, and there was a good deal of difficulty in devising a formula to which both he and Plunkett could subscribe.

Efforts were also made to bring into the new movement the best elements of the old Nationalist Party, but the attitude of John Dillon made these largely abortive. He had by this time lost much of his old hostility to Plunkett and to the co-operative movement, but, while he still regarded the ascendancy of Sinn Fein as a temporary aberration, held rigidly to the doctrine that the country had given its adherence to Sinn Fein and that intervention between it and the British Government would savor of disloyalty. Joseph Devlin, who was also approached, was more sympathetic, but would not go the length of identifying himself with the new movement.

Plunkett and his associates did not conceive

themselves to be acting in any spirit of hostility to Sinn Fein. Their intention was to play the part of the "honest broker," to provide a bridge between Irish and English opinion by which Sinn Fein and the British Government could reach an accommodation. The signatories to the original manifesto of the Irish Dominion League included some two score of names, many of which appearing as such were calculated to impress English opinion with the remarkable drift of Irish opinion towards the Left. They comprised peers like Lords Monteagle, Fingall and Ffrench; Lords Lieutenant of counties like Sir Nugent Everard, Sir Henry Bellingham, and Sir Algernon Coote; representatives of the Irish clan chieftains like O'Mahony, O'Connor Don, and MacGiolla Bride (Lord Ashbourne); a fair sprinkling of military officers like General Dayrell T. Hammond; and several leading figures in the learned professions and the arts, as well as representative business men and such adherents of the old Nationalist Party as Stephen Gwynn and Sir Thomas Grattan Esmonde. Another leading representative of the Party later joined the movement in the person of Captain Henry Harrison, formerly a lieutenant of Parnell, who subsequently succeeded Cruise O'Brien as secretary of the League.

The Irish Dominion League did not attract a great deal of active support in Ireland, but it was hardly expected to do so inasmuch as it was chiefly a propagandist organisation. As its unofficial organ, the *Irish Statesman* played, I think, a not unimportant part in providing a platform for constructive political thought in Ireland, and in maintaining a link between Irish opinion and the political forces in England—Labour, independent Liberalism, and the Young Tories—which were sympathetic to Ireland. The paper consistently laid stress on the necessity, aside from political settlement, of concentrating public attention upon the consideration of the problems which lay before a self-governing Ireland, and working out in advance economic and social policies. Besides providing an open political forum, in these departments, and in discussion of letters and the arts, it included among its contributors, who numbered almost every writer of distinction in Ireland, several of the more independent thinkers of Sinn Féin. In this way it served as a useful *nexus* between Sinn Féin and what may broadly be called middle opinion in Ireland.

From my association at this time as editor of the *Irish Statesman* with Horace Plunkett as its virtual proprietor I drew the impression that

in a sense he is too intellectually honest a man for the political arena. He was, perhaps, upon the whole ill-advised to adventure into it to the inevitable detriment of his real life-work in the sphere of constructive economics. To be able to see all sides of a case is a rare quality, but it is not necessarily a good part of the equipment of a working politician. Apart from one or two fundamental prejudices—such as the opposition to partition which was something like an obsession with him—this capacity for seeing all around a question is the true explanation of the irresolution and timidity as a politician of which Plunkett has sometimes been accused. It led him constantly to defer decision on matters of policy wherein any ordinary politician would take a prompt and decisive line and stick to it.

With an essentially philosophic rather than practical mind Plunkett combines an enormous conscientiousness which overwhelms him in detail and restrains him from relieving himself by that delegation of responsibility which is one of the first requisites in any leader of men. He has a gift for attracting able men to his enterprises, but no capacity for laying down the broad lines of their respective jobs and then leaving them alone to execute them. I recall him frequently worrying interminably over the exact wording of

some passage in some relatively unimportant proof while we tried in vain to get from him a definite expression of view on some really vital question of broad policy.

The writing of any political pronouncement by Plunkett usually means the almost complete paralysis of all other activity in his immediate neighbourhood. He works from draft after draft, continually altering and revising, and gradually calling into consultation everybody whose opinion on any point is likely—or even unlikely—to be of the smallest value. Both his passion for hearing all views and his inherent kindliness of disposition make him peculiarly susceptible to the influence of others.

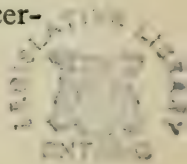
As an aspirant to Irish Nationalist leadership he was handicapped by a certain fundamental Englishness of outlook. Unfortunately, some of those associated with him in politics at this time whose influence weighed considerably with him strengthened unduly this element in his political make-up. One of these was R. A. Anderson, till recently Secretary of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society. Of Anderson's work in his prime for agricultural co-operation in Ireland it would be impossible to speak too highly. But politically the influence upon Plunkett of a man who was but a recent convert to Nationalism,

and retained always an extreme conservatism of political outlook, was not to the good at a time when the indispensable "safety first" rule in Irish politics was "Keep to the Left." Another whose influence counted for much with Plunkett was his relative, Lady Fingall. She, one felt, was moved in her advice to a large extent by the thought of the doors which might be closed against him if he took a certain line in politics and by social considerations of that *genre* from which, in Ireland of all countries, it is essential that any political figure on the Nationalist side should keep himself wholly free.

"Plunkett," said a not unkindly critic, "never quite catches up; he is always a day or two behind the times." Such restraining influences as these partly account for what there is of justice in the criticism. Without them it is conceivable that Plunkett, as from other quarters he was urged to do, might have thrown in his lot with Sinn Fein—a step which, in view of his standing and reputation in English and American eyes, might have had incalculable consequences in hastening the coming of peace in Ireland. But at least equally it is explained by the intellectual honesty which prevented him from taking up a position until his assurance of its validity was complete.

When all is said, there are too few men in public life in Ireland or any other country of such a type. The man essentially of cross-bench mind is not the best adapted to the heat of political struggle. But in a settled Ireland which, however, will have to face a host of problems of a different order, there should be ample place for a man like Plunkett. Sinn Fein has always been on the side of agricultural co-operation. On that ground alone it should welcome Plunkett as a maker of the new Ireland, even if in calmer days it is not ready to recognise his contribution to the achievement of political settlement.

The *Irish Statesman*, his sole adventure in journalism, ran for precisely a year—from the mid-summer of 1919 to the mid-summer of 1920. For a paper of its class, which aimed at ranking with the established serious weekly reviews in England, and was accepted by the Press of England and Ireland as holding such a position, its record must be almost unique in journalism. It was modelled closely upon the Fabian *New Statesman*, whose editor, Clifford Sharp, on a visit to Plunkett at his home at Kilteragh shortly before we launched the paper, gave us much valuable assistance in the preliminaries to its production. It was started eventually, after cer-



tain negotiations for funds had miscarried, on a capital of precisely five hundred pounds provided by Plunkett himself, and its first number appeared within six weeks from the date when the decision to publish it was finally taken.

The production of a sixpenny weekly paper in Ireland, especially when its policy was not that of the majority, was of course at that time quite an uneconomic proposition. The paper's hopes of realising ultimate financial stability depended absolutely upon the attainment of political settlement within a year. For a year it kept in being with an increasing influence but diminishing funds, supplemented by some capital from American sympathisers, until finally it was compelled to suspend publication with the prospect of settlement apparently as remote as ever. Perhaps it was as well that it ceased publication when it did, for the following autumn saw the beginning of the Black and Tan Terror in Ireland, and the paper, which was an outspoken critic of British policy, if still in existence would certainly have been suppressed.

The *Irish Statesman*, in its last days, was instrumental in paving the way for the last effort to avert the chaos to which Ireland was to relapse during the following year. By intensive propaganda especially among business men alarmed

at the state of the country, it laid with Henry Harrison the foundation of the Irish Peace Conference held in the historic Antient Concert Rooms in Dublin, the scene of many famous political gatherings. The conference, fully representative of all middle opinion in Ireland, and attended by more independent Ulstermen such as Lord Shaftesbury and more independent Sinn Feiners such as John Sweetman, was stewarded, thanks to a happy thought of Henry Harrison and a request to Arthur Griffith, by Republican police. It laid down a peace programme ; but, though Lloyd George himself had suggested its holding, its work was wholly ignored by the British Government. Followed the Terror and intensive guerrilla war, with, as their inevitable complement, the complete submergence of all moderate opinion. To take up the painful task of peace, after a year of agony, remained for other hands.

CHAPTER IV.¹

PRIESTS AND POLITICIANS

Catholicism and Sinn Fein—The Portent of Father O'Flanagan—The Church and Politics—Clerics in the Convention—Lay Leaders of Sinn Fein—De Valera—A Magnetic Personality—Romantic Glamour—An Unassuming President—Arthur Griffith—The Maker of Modern Ireland—Through Defeat to Victory—The Spirit of Fanaticism—Erskine Childers—The “Intellectuals”—Terence MacSwiney—The Tragedy of Brixton—A Landmark in Irish History—Mick Collins—The Popular Hero—Desmond FitzGerald—An Elusive Paper—Ireland's Press Agent.

I.

“FOR twelve days and nights he was up and down the constituency, going like a whirlwind and talking in impassioned language to the people at every village and street-corner and cross-

¹ This Chapter was written before the deaths of several of those mentioned in it. I have thought it best, however, to leave my impressions of them as they were originally penned.

roads where he could get people to listen to him." Such is an eye-witness's picture of Father Michael O'Flanagan during the by-election campaign in North Roscommon early in 1917, where Sinn Fein, in an election fought in deep snow with drifts blocking the roads, first showed its strength by the return, with a sweeping majority over the official Party candidate, of Count Plunkett, father of one of the executed leaders of the rising of 1916.

It was at this time that Father O'Flanagan first came into real prominence in the public eye. He was curate of Crossna in the North Roscommon constituency. The circumstance that most of the other leaders of Sinn Fein were then and for some time afterwards in jail threw him into a leading position in the movement which in any case his restless energy would have earned him, but from which otherwise his cloth might have kept him back. He was already known as an extreme partisan from his appearance at the great public funeral given in Dublin to O'Donovan Rossa, the Fenian chief, where he delivered the address. Later he was to become Vice-President of Sinn Fein.

A slight, tall, ruddy man, crowned with dark fluffy hair which even indoors seemed wind-blown—such was my impression of Father

O'Flanagan when I first saw him in the theatre of the Royal Dublin Society at an annual meeting of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society. There was a touch of comedy in the proceedings, with Father O'Flanagan at one end of the row of committee-men, at the other Father Tom Finlay, as good a co-operator as he but a firm supporter of constitutional methods, and in the middle the Grand Chaplain of the Orange Order. The three clerics seemed carefully to ignore one another's presence.

Politics are rigidly excluded from the meetings of the I.A.O.S.—it is the secret of the co-operative movement's strength—but in those electric days you could not keep politics inferentially out of anything in Ireland ; and when certain remarks of Father O'Flanagan tickled the patriotic sentiments of the delegates—co-operators first, but most of them good Sinn Feiners at the same time—one felt the magnetic power wielded by this young curate who, with his people behind him, had fought his own Bishop for his right to freedom of political action.

It was in this North Monaghan election that Sinn Fein tendencies among the younger Catholic priesthood first became apparent. A good deal of nonsense, it may be remarked here, has been talked and written of one kind and another about

clergy in politics in Ireland. That a priest should espouse so warmly the Sinn Fein cause was anathema even to many of those whom custom had inured to the fact of clerical influence in the counsels of the Nationalist Party. The fact is that in a country situated politically like Ireland it was altogether impossible, however desirable it might have been, to keep the clergy out of politics.

The Catholic Church is in a sense a democratic institution. Its clergy and their Bishops come from the ranks of the people, and it is scarcely reasonable to expect that men brought up in a strong Nationalist environment should incontinently shed their Nationalism as soon as they assume the Roman collar—though it may be reasonable to expect that they should temper political partisanship with Christian charity.

Again, the Catholic Church is in a sense a political institution. Its strength consists in its hold upon the affections of the people, and in Ireland clerical support of the popular cause played necessarily a large part in maintaining that hold. The Hierarchy and the clergy may naturally be expected to share the varying shades of political opinion of the people from whom they derive, but it should not be overlooked that their occasional united intervention in politics has

often been of the greatest public service. Though there was much criticism in England of the action of the Hierarchy in taking under its wing the anti-conscription movement in the spring of 1918, there is no doubt whatever that this action averted an appalling bloodshed.

John Redmond himself certainly was no clericalist, but one of those on whose counsel he set the highest store was Dr. Kelly, the Bishop of Ross, who, long in close contact with public affairs, was one of the representatives of the Catholic Church in the Irish Convention, and stood by Redmond, in a minority among ecclesiastics, during the last trying period of the Nationalist leader's political career.

That there was nothing very extraordinary in the development of sentiment among a section of the clergy in the direction of Sinn Féin is shown by the changing attitude of Dr. O'Donnell, the Bishop of Raphoe, another clerical member of the Convention, and a prelate who has played a large part in Irish affairs. Himself as keen a politician as Dr. Kelly, a leading figure in Redmond's United Irish League, and equally a strong supporter of the Parliamentary Party, the Bishop of Raphoe—an O'Donnell from Tyrconnell—though an older man, was the possessor of many popular qualities, more of a democrat and an

enthusiast. He was almost the one native speaker in the Convention, and had won the affection of "Irish" Irelanders by his energetic efforts in the North-West for the preservation of the Irish language.

It must have gone very much against the grain for him to set himself in opposition to John Redmond, and so experienced a politician must have known very well the consequences of the Convention's failure. Yet it was Dr. O'Donnell; more than anyone else, even Joseph Devlin, who, by his attitude on the Sub-Committee of Nine, and later in full Convention, destroyed the prospect of accord between the majority and the minority of the Nationalists, and thereby ensured the failure of the Convention to reach anything like unanimous agreement. His reasons for his attitude were stated in the minority report of the Nationalists which he signed. They were that, without separate Customs and Excise, Ireland would fail to attain a national status like that enjoyed by the Dominions, and that, in the then state of Irish opinion, without control of Customs no scheme the Convention recommended would receive sufficient popular support to be effective. He was influenced, one supposes, by his close touch with public sentiment in a region where the tide of national feeling was running very high.

Now, if a prelate of Dr. O'Donnell's position and attainments thus moved with the times so markedly towards the Left, it was surely not remarkable that younger clergy should be found swinging still further over and going the whole way with Sinn Fein. If they needed encouragement in this direction from their ecclesiastical superiors, they had it in the fact that Dr. Fogarty, whose diocese of Killaloe covered De Valera's constituency, adopted a position scarcely distinguishable from uncompromising adherence to the Sinn Fein policy.

There is a widespread belief outside Ireland that no action is ever taken by the Catholic Church in Ireland without ulterior motive. Almost some people would have one believe that this or that Bishop, this or that priest, is instructed or encouraged to take up such and such an attitude in accordance with some deep-laid plan of campaign elaborated by the higher authorities of the Church. In this way the balance is kept even, and the Church is enabled to enjoy the luxury of running with the hare and hunting with the hounds. Some would even go further, and assert that the Catholic Church in Ireland, hostile to and afraid of self-government, has taken sides in the divisions in popular movements precisely in order to perpetuate those divisions

and to ensure failure to realise the popular hopes of freedom.

It is possible that there may be something in the theory which is thus pushed to extreme lengths. That self-government is bound to a certain extent to weaken the power of the Church in Ireland goes almost without saying. It is quite conceivable that the attitude adopted by its authorities towards the political action of its priests is motivated to a certain extent by a long view of political considerations. But to assume that the actions of every Bishop and priest are regimented in accordance with some general strategic plan locked in the archives of Armagh or in the brain of the Cardinal Primate is to leave out of account altogether the human factor, which in Ireland of all countries you cannot leave out of account.

Certainly Cardinal Logue did not fit the part assumed for him in such a view of a Machiavellian design inspiring every detail of the policy of the Catholic Church in Ireland in its relation to national politics. Still less does the character of some of those whom it assumes to be conscious or unconscious pawns in an abstruse political game fit in. It may be less exciting, but it is much more natural to believe that the alignment of forces in the Church either for or against Sinn

Fein, or in the shadings of opinion between, was due simply to the human preference of those who took such sides.

As for the charge that politics in Ireland are priest-ridden, it is just as true on the Unionist side as, and no more true than, it is on the Nationalist side. If there were to be found plenty of political priests in Nationalist Ireland, so there were to be found plenty of Covenanting clergy in Unionist Ulster. And the Protestant Episcopalian Church in Ireland displayed just as much—or as little—agility in sitting on the political fence as the Catholic Church. If the latter had to try to hold a balance even between Sinn Fein and the old Nationalism, the former had an even harder task in trying to reconcile the separatism of Belfast and the North-east counties, where were to be found the bulk of its adherents, with the equally intense dislike of the political partition of the country exhibited by the more scattered Protestants of the South and West.

Just as the two sides in the Catholic Church had their more or less representative protagonists in the Irish Convention, so had the two sides in the Protestant Church in the persons of Dr. Crozier, Archbishop of Armagh, and Dr. Bernard, Archbishop of Dublin and since Provost of Trinity College in succession to Dr. Mahaffy. The

latter, suave, scholarly, critical-minded but of English sympathies, the very type of the ecclesiastic in politics, took his stand with Redmond and the majority Nationalists and the Midletonians. The former, a genial and conciliatory figure, joined hands with Mahaffy and took characteristic refuge from his dilemma in the invention of another. The minority report of these two clerics proposed a federated Ireland on the Swiss model, and dissented from the other solutions proposed on the ground that they must lead either to "the coercion of Ulster, which is impossible, or the partition of Ireland, which would be disastrous."

This engaging formula clearly owed its origin to the fertile brain of Dr. Mahaffy, who was responsible for the famous *mot* that in Ireland "the inevitable never happens, the impossible always occurs." Wit, courtier, scholar, surely one of the greatest but also one of the least offensive snobs in Europe—he used to talk of a time when he found himself in a room in Buckingham Palace with six Queens—often ridiculed by Nationalists as the supreme type of Anglo-Irish *shoneen*, but a man who really combined with his superiority to Irish ideals a very hearty contempt for the modern British effort to govern his country, Mahaffy was one of those too common

Irishmen whose title to remembrance rests wholly upon the shifting sand of oral tradition. One of my most vivid memories of him is of a day during the rising of 1916, when Healy of the *Irish Times* and myself during a particularly hot spell of firing invoked from him the use of a private way through Trinity College to gain access to our adjacent office. Mahaffy could see nothing in the rising but an envious assault of the "have-nots" on the "haves," and was firm in the belief that Pearse aspired to usurp the Provostship of Trinity.

But this is to digress a little from my main theme, which concerns the prevalence of clericalism in Irish politics. I have tried to show that it was in itself no more uncommon on one side than on the other; and, as for the pressure of clerical influence, memories of a time when I acted as lay editor of the (Protestant) *Church of Ireland Gazette*, a general as well as religious weekly paper, recall that too independent laymen could be as sharply reprimanded from the Protestant as from the Catholic Palace at Armagh. Father O'Flanagan's first appearance in politics was hailed as an alarming portent for the sole reason that the significance of the whole new Sinn Fein movement was itself as yet little appreciated.

II.

Father O'Flanagan quickly passed more into the background of affairs when Eamon de Valera and the others imprisoned and interned after the 1916 rising were set free by the general amnesty proclaimed on the summoning of the Convention in the following year. De Valera, in a sense, had greatness thrust upon him ; he owed his position originally to accident rather than to anything else.

The history of this schoolmaster, teacher of Irish and mathematics in a Jesuit college near Dublin, began only when he served as a minor commandant during the Easter rising in the Irish capital. There were rumours subsequently, suggested perhaps by his foreign name, that he had a past of extraordinary revolutionary adventure in foreign lands. In fact, born in Brooklyn, the son of a Spanish-American father and an Irish mother, he passed his childhood and youth quietly with his mother's family in County Limerick. He was a man in the early thirties at the time of the rising, in which he played a small but gallant part. " You have but one life to live and one death to die," he is reported as saying to his followers ; " see that you do both like

men." Then and after he stands out as the very type of the scholar with the sword.

His minor *rôle* in the rising, combined with his American citizenship, saved him from the fate of the more notable leaders. The commutation of his death sentence to penal servitude for life, of which he had served barely a year when the general amnesty set him free, left him the sole survivor of those of any prominence among the "men of Easter Week"; and it was to that fortunate chance that he owed his rapid rise to the leadership of Sinn Fein.

Lennox Robinson, the dramatist, has pleasantly described the final scenes at Ennis, "that town of streams and graceful bridges," the county town of Clare whither de Valera went straight from prison to fight the by-election caused by the death on the battle-fields of Flanders of John Redmond's brother, Major "Willie" Redmond.

"The gate opens at last and we are swept through it. But there is no rowdyism, no disorder. The Sinn Fein Volunteers take entire possession of the situation; they organise the crowd; they form ranks in front of the Courthouse steps; the discipline is perfect; we mere outsiders are pushed back, we are like spectators at a military review. A line of bored police at the foot of the steps faces the Volunteers; a D.I. strangely aloof

from the situation stands at the foot of a granite pillar. . . . There is no longer any doubt about it, de Valera is in, the Volunteers cheer again and again, and the man capers. We breathe a sigh of relief as he is pushed aside and the hero of the day, in Volunteer uniform, comes forward. Young, dark, eager, vivid, the very counterpart of these young men around us. If personality counts for anything, if like be attracted by like, we understand why he was won. . . .”

Personality—that was the whole secret of de Valera. This long, thin man, with sallow and bespectacled face almost melancholy in repose, vivid and intense only when he spoke, possessed in a high degree that magic gift of personal magnetism which makes and marks all big political leaders. Yet he was little of an orator, and when he spoke in public seemed rather to be arguing with himself aloud than trying to convince an audience. He certainly was nothing of a stylist—his political manifestos have always been models of turgidity. A man of thought rather than affairs, of action as it were by chance, he learnt his job as a working politician as he went along, and became competent at least in the technique of leadership, though the real brains-carrier of Sinn Fein always remained Arthur Griffith, whom, after a six years’ tenure,

de Valera succeeded in the summer of 1917 as President of the organisation. The chance which left him the sole survivor of the "men of Easter Week" threw him into the position of leader; but it was his personality which secured and confirmed and held him in it.

Every incident in his career since his election as President served to increase the romantic glamour which surrounded him. Imprisoned again in the autumn of 1918 in connection with the so-called "German plot," he makes in the following year, with two companions, a dramatic escape from Lincoln Jail, and returns to Ireland. Before the year is out he has made his way to the United States, working his passage. Just before the Christmas of 1920 he is back again in Ireland, having eluded, very few people even yet know just how, the utmost vigilance of the British authorities. Till the truce in the following midsummer he controls from underground the affairs of the Irish Republic. Nothing of his movements is chronicled, save when on his invitation James Craig, leader of the Ulster minority, goes to talk with him in his place of hiding. Yet to journalists and others who have business with him and whose good faith can be trusted he is always mysteriously accessible. Small wonder that this elusive de Valera, this

President "on the run" but always on the spot when needed, should loom in the imagination of Ireland an almost legendary figure, of heroic stature. Till the fame of Michael Collins in the even more attractive *rôle* of guerrilla leader began to be noised abroad, there was none to match de Valera in romantic appeal to the imagination of Young Ireland.

Many stories, some true, more apocryphal, are told of de Valera's adventures in Dublin and elsewhere while he was evading the British authorities. I shall content myself with one, which illustrates the feelings which prevailed at this time between the Dublin Metropolitan Police and the auxiliaries and Black and Tans. It concerns not de Valera himself, but a double whom he was fortunate in possessing. The latter—an entirely inoffensive citizen—was walking along Brunswick Street when he was stopped by an agitated Metropolitan policeman. "Don't be going along there, Mr. de Valera," said the policeman; "them divils is out raiding there, and 'tis as much as your life is worth." De Valera's double repudiated the suggestion that he was the Sinn Fein President. "Sure, of course you have to tell me that," replied the policeman, "but don't I know you well, and 'tis sorry I'd be to see any harm coming to you."

The other again asserted his case of mistaken identity, and made to pass on. "Glory be to God," exclaimed the policeman, "maybe you're Mr. de Valera or maybe you're not; but if I take you for Mr. de Valera, in God's name will you tell me who them divils may not take you for?"

Eamonn de Valera has sometimes been accused of vanity. He had enough hero-worship to turn any man's head, but vanity in the sense of personal pride in his position as first President of the Irish Republic cannot fairly be charged against him. Walking, dispatch-case in hand, through the streets of Dublin to his office in the Mansion House after the truce he gave the impression of being the most unassuming of men and the most democratic of Presidents. It is, at the same time, more than doubtful whether he ever possessed the true spirit of democracy. If he had little personal vanity, he had more than a little of intellectual arrogance. One sees in him some parallel with Woodrow Wilson—some element of faith in a Messianic mission. Perhaps in some respects, with his steely enthusiasm, his formal and logical mind of the mathematician, the ideal leader of an insurgent-Ireland, he was never of the proper temper of the negotiator when it came to the

making of peace, still less the possessor of the constructive mind fitted to play the chief part in building up a settled Ireland.

III.

The rising of 1916 made Sinn Fein as a political power, and incidentally it made Eamonn de Valera. But the man who made Sinn Fein, and the authentic maker of modern Ireland, was Arthur Griffith. Two types of men more fundamentally different than de Valera and Griffith it would be difficult to imagine. Perhaps their only quality in common was their extreme tenacity. But the one swam into fame on the flood tide of popular favour, the other, swept back time and again by the ebb of failure, ever breasted the current till at last it turned and flowed not against him, but with him.

The public Griffith and the private Griffith were two distinct men. The latter was one of the most genial of souls, a good talker, one of the widest interests, a very human being. But the public Griffith seemed sometimes more like a scientific thinking machine than a man. All the panoply and colour of politics which were the very breath of life to de Valera were to him a

mere superfluity. He had his enthusiasm, but he used it as a generating force, not for fireworks. Rhetoric and sentimentality were anathema to him as wastage of energy. He was in a sense the Mazzini of Irish politics, but he was more likely to quote you a Blue-book than the works of his Italian prototype. By contrast with de Valera, he was a master of pungent prose, a born journalist in direct lineage from Dean Swift.

His tenacity was amazing. Twenty years ago he set himself to restore Ireland to her place among the European nations, first through the agency of a little weekly paper with a minute circulation—read, as Robert Lynd has aptly put it, “by very few people except very old Fenians and very young boys and girls”—then through his famous book, “The Resurrection of Hungary,” of which he was able to claim in the preface to the second edition that “no book published in Ireland within living memory has been so widely read.”

The book which held up the example of Hungary in the constitutional struggle with Austria as an inspiration for the people of Ireland—a wonderfully compact and vivid study of a hundred pages which was the real beginning of Sinn Féin—started a movement which momentarily seemed to threaten the ascendancy of the Nationalist

Parliamentary Party. But it came to nothing, and some of Griffith's earlier adherents drifted towards the neo-Fenianism nurtured by the avowedly revolutionary Republican Brotherhood, while more returned to their belief in the policy of John Redmond.

Failure made no difference to Griffith. He held fast. Though by 1912 Sinn Fein had shrunk to a coterie, making its limited appeal to a company of writers and scholars, and to some extent to the smaller *bourgeoisie* of the cities, having lost what influence it once possessed as an active agent in political life, he kept on with his patient work of colouring the backgrounds of Irish thought. Later, in the full tide of success, Sinn Fein found it expedient to make some sort of compromise with Irish Labour as a political force. But Griffith, in these earlier days of defeat, was one of the most devastating critics of James Larkin in labour politics at a time when expediency might have recommended a more cautious policy. Expediency was not a word in his political vocabulary.

In controversy he used always an extreme ruthlessness of method. Somehow he always kept a paper of his own going—first the *United Irishman*, then *Nationality*, then *Old Ireland*. I remember when I was editing the *Irish States-*

man we became involved in a controversy with our Sinn Fein weekly contemporaries. They charged that Plunkett had founded the paper and established the Irish Dominion League with money obtained from the Irish War Aims Committee, a war propagandist body of which he had been chairman, and that he was in fact acting as a paid agent of the British Government. We had a complete and unanswerable refutation of this damaging charge, and we published it, together with a polite suggestion that the Sinn Fein papers should withdraw.

Most of them did, Darrell Figgis, then editor of the *Republic*, with a graceful gesture of apology, others more grudgingly. But Arthur Griffith took not the slightest notice; he simply went on publishing the original statement. A political friend of his told me that he regarded this as a permissible method of political controversy. "A good lie with a good start can never be overtaken," was Griffith's attitude as reported to me. If this really was his attitude, the incident only shows how his ruthlessness in controversy sometimes got the better of the extreme intellectual honesty which was his chief characteristic and his main strength.

Incomparably a more able man in almost every respect than de Valera, certainly the ideal

negotiator—the settlement to be made at the London Conference as one could foresee its main principles in advance was exactly in line with his whole doctrine—one doubts all the same whether Griffith would have been in some ways better fitted than his predecessor as President for the tasks which lie before a self-governing Ireland in the future. He had not the typically *doctrinaire* mind of de Valera, but still he possessed a singularly inelastic mind. The very tenacity with which he held to his original outlook for two decades had in a new situation the defects of its qualities. It is questionable whether in those two decades he ever modified a single article of his political faith. So far as he gave any indications of what that faith was, apart from the general question of Anglo-Irish relations, Griffith figured, especially in his attitude towards Labour, as something of a reactionary.

But it is difficult to think of him apart from the almost scientific Nationalism in which his whole creed was comprised. If one were required to invent an abstract nationalist—not necessarily an Irish Nationalist, but an abstraction typifying nationalism in general—one would invent a character which would look uncommonly like Arthur Griffith. It was hard to foresee the precise place for such a figure in the public life

of a country where Nationalism has ceased to be the main-spring of politics.

I do not in saying this wish to be taken as implying that he was any kind of a fanatic. If one seeks for the spirit of fanaticism personified in the ranks of the Sinn Fein leaders, one finds its embodiment, curiously enough, in one who was only half an Irishman and a late adherent to the Sinn Fein cause. Much more than in de Valera himself, that spirit was seen in the man of English parentage and association who in the last year or two before the truce became one of the strongest influences upon a leader very susceptible to the influence of others—Erskine Childers. There were one or two comic figures to be seen in Dublin in recent years who were nicknamed by the more irreverent “synthetic Gaels.” They were people of English extraction who insisted on being more Gaelic than the Gaels themselves. The mark of them was that they always wore a kilt and habitually murdered Gaelic with an Oxford accent.

Erskine Childers did not wear a kilt, nor did he insist on talking bad Gaelic even to people who didn't understand good Gaelic. But if he had few of the outward and visible signs, he had all of the inward and spiritual grace, of the synthetic Gael. He was a somewhat pathetic

example of a man in whom Nationalism had gone to his head—a thing which it seldom does in the case of the authentic Irishman, who even in his wildest extravagances is apt to keep lurking somewhere a certain fundamental sanity of outlook. But to this sometime British naval intelligence officer during the war, this sometime secretary of the Irish Convention called to devise a middle way of Irish settlement, the preservation of the pure milk of extreme Republicanism, its forcible feeding to everybody as the only possible diet, became a positive obsession. It was a strange metamorphosis in one who, in private life, was the most charming and cultured of men, and whose transparent honesty and sincerity in the change in his convictions, and in all the actions which those convictions inspired, could not be doubted by the bitterest of his public opponents.

Childers wrote two books which seem to give the key to his character as an Irish politician. One was "The Riddle of the Sands," a novel, based on yachting experience, of spy work in German coastal waters, the other "The Framework of Home Rule," a monumental work on the financial and fiscal aspects of Irish settlement. The latter was a model of patient industry applied in intensely logical political thought, the former a very human, even a jolly, book. In the later



political evolution of Childers the two strands of mind seem to have intertwined, with a curious reaction the one on the other.

The fervour of the spy novel combined with the industry of the economic work, but in the combination the human touch disappeared altogether, and the logic narrowed into a rigid and remorseless, a fanatically logical, pedantry. World politics, which are a series of compromises, all came for Childers to be judged by the touchstone of the settlement of Ireland, and he would cheerfully crucify his adopted nation for the satisfaction of his own uncompromising theorism. In this attitude of mind he found an aider and abettor in his American wife, whose wide culture seemed to flower in a very Fury's hatred of England. A familiar spirit of de Valera, Erskine Childers had a second in the late Cathal Brugha, Minister of Defence in the Republican Government. Here in these three among the leading figures of Sinn Fein were a triumvirate to whom Republicanism itself was an end rather than a means to anything.

IV.

One found little of this spirit in the directing heads and the superior officers of the Irish Republican Army. Those of any note in whom something of it was to be found could be counted

almost on the fingers of one hand. Most prominent among these were Austin Stack, a Kerry man and a participant in some degree in Roger Casement's mis-adventure off the south-west coast, and Liam Mellows, leader of the insurgents in Galway during the rising of 1916. But it was not to be found in E. J. Duggan, one of the plenipotentiaries to the London Conference, who on behalf of the Irish Republican Army had signed the truce with General Macready, and in his capacity as a solicitor had been released on parole from internment to attend the hearing of a case in the House of Lords involving the rights under the military *régime* in Ireland of American citizens, in the person of one Thomas Pedlar. Though he afterwards went over to the Republican side, the same is in a sense true of Robert Barton, I.R.A. Commandant and member of the Conference, a Wicklow landowner, cousin of Childers, in whom personal bitterness might well have been explained by the savage sentence of penal servitude passed upon him.

Nor, again, was it to be found in Terence MacSwiney, the Lord Mayor of Cork who died on hunger-strike in Brixton Jail, and who was in many ways the type of the "intellectuals" among the I.R.A. Commandants, as against

those who owed their positions as such rather to their local knowledge of ground and their territorial connections.

His book, "Principles of Freedom," published after his death, is one of those posthumous books whose publication does the memory of their author no great service. It is a book which never would have been published if in the last months of his life, and still more in the circumstances of his death, Terence MacSwiney had not already told the world everything, and more than everything, that this book tells of himself and of his philosophy of life. It is doubtful, indeed, if its publication does not do his memory a definite disservice.

The public at large remembers the late Lord Mayor of Cork as a romantic figure who died with great nobility for his ideal. The crowd of Londoners who gave reverent homage to his memory when his body was carried through the streets of the English capital on its last journey back to Ireland was something of a portent; and history, perhaps, will note his death as a land-mark in the development of the world's appreciation of what that ideal meant. Those who knew him remember "Terry Mac" as a very human and lovable personality, as a lover of life much more than the traditional revolutionist.

But "Principles of Freedom"—a collection of articles published in a propagandist newspaper in the days when Sinn Fein was a voice crying in the wilderness and the old Parliamentary Party reigned supreme in Ireland—this somewhat amateurish book tends to present him as the theorist ridden by the *idée fixe*. If one knew nothing about the man, one would be tempted to dismiss it briefly as a dull book by a dull dog. One who knew how very far from a dull dog he was may be resentful of this posthumous presentation of him.

Terence MacSwiney was, in fact, no artist. One saw that clearly in his play, "The Revolutionist," produced in the spring of 1921 by the Abbey Theatre in Dublin—produced for the same reason as his book was published; because it was the work of the famous Terence MacSwiney, and for no other reason. Neither as playwright nor author was he an artist. A cynic might add, as some French papers even among those sympathetic to Ireland could not restrain themselves from saying, that neither in the circumstances of his death was he an artist. Certainly he was not one of those revolutionary leaders born to inspire by the pen.

The pen, nevertheless, was the weapon which he preferred to the sword. He was that not

very uncommon type, the pacifist driven by what he conceived to be the logic of events into an activist. It is a combination which makes a man generous of mind as well as something of a pendant at the same time. It is that combination which gives his posthumous book, in spite of its inherent dullness, a certain nobility. The tragic paradox of MacSwiney was that, while his leaning was to "those things that lie about the mind," it was as a man of action, not as a man of thought, that he best revealed himself. His death illuminated his life and his philosophy of life.

One might suppose that the leader most likely to be a bitter-ender, a fanatical opponent of England, would be the man who for many months was the most "wanted" man in Ireland, and the Irishman most hated by the newspaper-fed English people. But it was a shrewd political instinct which made Michael Collins when he came to London almost as much a hero with the English people as he had been the darling of the Irish people; just as it was a shrewd business instinct which made an English publisher value his reminiscences of his adventures "on the run" at the figure of £10,000. All the world loves a good fighter, and when Collins came to negotiate peace his assumed responsibility for all the crimes laid to the charge of the Republican

Army in war were forgotten as if they had never been. In point of fact Collins's share in the direction of military operations was much exaggerated. The real "mystery man" of the Republican Army was Richard Mulcahy, its Chief of Staff, whose very photograph was unobtainable until after the treaty of peace had been ratified by the British Parliament.

But it would, of course, be absurd to underestimate the contribution made by Collins to the fighting strength of the Republican movement. His name grew into one with which to conjure, an inspiration to the ranks of Sinn Fein. The price which the British authorities set on his head was a very modest estimate of what he was worth to the other side. At the same time, though he proved an ideal guerrilla leader, fighting was not Collins's *métier*. He was one of the singularly few men of real constructive ability thrown up by the Sinn Fein movement, which has had many heroes and figure-heads but the merest handful of personalities really fitted for the tasks of national leadership.

His career in connection with the fighting side of Sinn Fein has loomed largest in the public eye abroad as well as in Ireland; but probably of more lasting worth to his country is the constructive work which he did in his official capacity

as Minister of Finance in the Republican Government. A man of wonderful personality, shrewd and alert brain, fine wit and a large measure of magnetism, Michael Collins was with some reason set by the verdict of British public opinion in the place of Griffith, the titular leader of the Irish delegation at Downing Street. Probably neither of these two chief figures in the London negotiations on the Irish side could have brought them to a successful conclusion without the other; the qualities of the one were the complement of those of the other. But the qualities of Michael Collins, who to a reputation made first in war added the credit of knowing how and when to make peace, seemed likelier to make their mark in the self-governing Ireland of the future.

In this connection note should be taken of the extent of the work of nation-building that was done in Sinn Fein Ireland between the General Election of 1918 and the date of the truce—a work which was in part maintained even during the most intense period of military activity. Perhaps the most important part of this work was that undertaken by the National Commission on the Resources and Industries of Ireland, established under the auspices of Dail Eireann, but functioning independently of that body. Working through a series of expert committees,

with the assistance frequently of men who were not Sinn Feiners, the Commission undertook the enormous task of making a complete scientific survey of the whole field of Irish economic life. It was an enterprise of a kind hitherto almost completely neglected in Ireland, and planned on a scale which few other countries have yet rivalled. Its first reports have been models of industry in the collection of information, of lucidity in its collation and arrangement, and of suggestiveness in its application to economic problems.

In this branch of the work of Sinn Fein a notable personal discovery was that of Darrell Figgis. Journalist, poet, novelist, a man of too critical a mind to find place easily in political Sinn Fein, Figgis as *litterateur* gave little promise of note as a practical economist. But to him as its Secretary the work of the Industrial Commission owes very much of its achievement.

V.

But of all the leading figures of Sinn Fein, the one with whom a newspaper man in Ireland inevitably came most in touch was Desmond Fitzgerald. In the modern State the uses of publicity are well enough known, but one recalls no earlier precedent for a Government appointing,

as did the Irish Republican Government, a regular Minister of Publicity.

Yet it had reason in appointing such a Minister. The modern newspaper reader may think that the Press-agenting of Ireland is, if anything, rather overdone than otherwise ; but it was not always thus. One may take as a witness Emile Montégut, a writer less well known than he deserves to be. In 1855, after a period of European convulsions, he contributed to the *Revue des Deux Mondes* an article on John Mitchel, the Young Irelander, entitled " A Study in Irish Nationalism," which opened with these words : " In the year 1848, when every throne in Europe rocked and every race was disturbed, Ireland had her own little rebellion ; it was easily suppressed. This revolutionary attempt passed, so to speak, unperceived. No one troubled about the fate of Ireland, or had a tear of pity for her prisoners, one of whom was descended from the ancient kings of Munster. The Catholics themselves, the only party in Europe which at any time has shown sympathy for Ireland, were unmoved."

This attitude of Europe towards Ireland Montégut explained in two ways. " In the first place, the nearness of England will always be hurtful to the poor sister Cinderella. . . . In the next place, the Celtic character, like monastic

life, like the passion of the ideal, evades the appreciation of the vulgar. The oppressor of Ireland is England—Protestant England, constitutional, liberal, industrial and trading England, the most accomplished type of the modern nation, the model of nineteenth century civilisation. How could the men of our time be expected to take Ireland's part? Has Ireland invented spinning looms, railways, steamboats? What inventions, what service, does Europe owe to her? This is the view of the influential, opulent, enlightened section of European society. Abandoned by these all-powerful classes, can Ireland count at least on the sympathies of the revolutionists? No. The most anarchical Irishmen, the most fiery partisan of physical force, is in fact less versed in liberal ideas than the most obstinate Monarchist on the Continent. John Mitchel, assuredly the most violent of the Young Irelanders, is, at bottom, less revolutionary than the average English shopkeeper. Nor is the obstinate attachment of the Irish to Catholicism calculated to conquer the sympathies of the radicals."

"In short," concluded Montégut, "neither the extreme nor the moderate sections of modern society set store on Ireland, and she finds them in turn indifferent and lukewarm towards her cause. By virtue of her position Ireland cannot

expect that public opinion will be excited by her misfortunes as it might be by those of other countries. The shadow of England covers her. The contrast with the land of liberty, of commerce, of industry, is too striking, and must mislead the masses. English publicity is immense, and all Europe reads English newspapers ; but who reads Irish journals and pamphlets ? In these polemics England always speaks the last word, and, just as English civilisation harms the cause of Ireland, so the noise of English publicity stifles the voice of the Irish people ; in this ugly struggle Europe hears only the voice of England."

Of America, of course, such a statement was even then not true ; but, as far as Europe is concerned, this penetrating analysis of the indifference of the Continent to the affairs of Ireland was, a few years ago, as true as it was in the days of a couple of generations ago of which Montégut wrote. Apart from general indifference in the Allied countries Ireland had to face a certain element of positive hostility due to the association of the insurgents of 1916 with Germany. As for the neutral countries, as late as the autumn of 1919 an Irishman in the British Consular service—which somehow seems, as in the case of Casement, to breed in them a critical spirit towards England—felt himself moved to write from Copenhagen, a

capital which has been called "the whispering gallery of Europe," that "until Ireland emulates the now universal practice of providing news for foreign consumption, Europe will continue to see our diminutive figures through the wrong end of the telescope."

But the year following the establishment of Dail Eireann began to see, with the appointment of D  smond FitzGerald as Minister of Publicity, a very marked change in this respect. Much later in the day Dublin Castle began to realise the importance of publicity, and, with the installation in its austere precincts of a professional publicist in the person of Basil Clarke, a well-known English journalist, set about reversing the earlier policy under which inquiring journalists had been treated as at best a necessary evil. But the Castle's adventures in the business could not be regarded by the most sympathetic observer as altogether happy. A single incident suffices to illustrate the way in which its propaganda was brought into disrepute.

A party of camera men was taken under official auspices on a specially conducted tour round Ireland. Among the results of the tour was a photograph, which obtained publicity in the English Press, purporting to represent a scene after an ambush near Tralee in County Kerry. It showed, among other things, numerous corpses

lying about a road. Unfortunately, an Irish paper was able to reproduce the photograph with another which revealed the fact that the alleged scene of the Kerry ambush was in reality a place just outside Dublin, where the whole affair had been staged for the benefit of the camera men.

Sinn Fein was never so clumsy. On the contrary, it kept itself free from even the suspicion of "doping." It consistently made easy the path of the newspaper man assigned to inform himself and his paper about Ireland. This applied even to the representatives of English newspapers avowedly hostile to Sinn Fein. Strangers in Ireland, as an English king had occasion to complain of his settlers centuries ago, tend traditionally to become "more Irish than the Irish themselves"; and this is a process of assimilation which has been known to affect even hardened visiting journalists. The publicity and the propaganda of Sinn Fein, though under the same direction, were kept quite distinct. Anybody who wanted propaganda could certainly get it; but equally Sinn Fein was concerned to supply information and to let the facts speak for themselves.

On the propagandist side its principal medium was the *Irish Bulletin*, a little typewritten sheet of news and comment published daily except on Saturdays and Sundays. It was distributed in

Dublin by hand, elsewhere through the mails. Its circulation, in terms of which, however, its influence was by no means to be measured, amounted only to some hundreds of copies, a large proportion of its recipients being politicians and journalists. A parallel to it was the Brussels paper which kept a free existence all through the German occupation of Belgium and stung the invaders like a gadfly.

To be found in possession of a copy of the *Irish Bulletin* was latterly a criminal offence, and the British forces ransacked Dublin for months seeking for its offices. They were discovered at last situated, in accordance with an admirable principle of camouflage, in a block facing a hotel much frequented by military and auxiliary officers. But, thanks to the elasticity provided by a system of reserve centres and relay staffs, the *Bulletin* was able cheerfully to reappear a few days later.

Desmond FitzGerald was as elusive and as effective as the newspaper which he controlled. More annoyed when a would-be newspaper admirer described him as "Desmond the dilettante" than when the *Morning Post* dubbed him "Desmond the desperado," he certainly looked the part of the former rather than the latter. But indeed it was difficult for him to get annoyed except when his chiefs imposed restraints upon his functions as a channel of information, as

during the London negotiations when he would express to assembled Pressmen his regret that he had nothing to report with the air of one conferring a favour—those curious negotiations about which there was so constantly nothing to report, but about whose general progress one somehow managed just the same to keep himself informed.

His debonair manner masked a wide and profound acquaintance with the world-wide machinery of publicity ; and earlier in Dublin he was on intimate terms with every visiting Pressman. At times when the hue and cry was not too close after him a regular visitor to the offices of the *Freeman's Journal* where they mostly congregated, at other times to be found in more discreet quarters, he contrived to keep himself in close and constant touch with the newspaper world of Europe and America. Ireland at this period, especially during 1920, was thick with journalists from France, Spain, Italy and other European countries as well as the representatives of British and American papers. Partly their presence was due to the widespread interest excited by the spectacle of Sinn Fein Ireland—this was in the days before the Black and Tan Terror—ousting British authority over a wide area of the country and setting up instead its own authority, with all the regular machinery of courts and police.

But partly at least it was due to the success of the steps taken by Sinn Fein under the direction of FitzGerald to enlist world opinion in the Irish cause. It had established propaganda offices abroad in Paris, Brussels, Rome, Madrid, and even further afield. George Gavan Duffy, one of the delegates to the London Conference, a polished cosmopolitan who looked the part, was a useful aid to the movement as Irish Republican representative successively in Rome and Paris, and it had other competent agents abroad.

The driving force behind the whole of Sinn Fein propaganda, however, was the personality and the knowledge of Desmond FitzGerald, who had himself lived some time on the Continent and spoke more than one European language. In the case of France especially, of course, the post-peace friction between that country and England, and the consequent readiness of much of the Paris Press to use any stick for beating Britain, made the path of Sinn Fein easier. But only persistent and very skilful publicity could have brought about that pressure of foreign opinion, Continental as well as American, which contributed so powerfully towards the final settlement. And for that pressure of foreign opinion a large part of the credit belongs to Sinn Fein's Minister of Publicity.

CHAPTER V

THE OTHER IRELAND

Mecca in Rathmines—Æ—The Tradition of the Salon—The Philosophy of George Russell—Irish Economics—Co-Operation—The Plunkett House—The Irish Labour Movement—An Abbey Lecture—Chesterton and Shaw—Labour Leaders—Jim Larkin—A New Factor in Nationalism—The Stirring of the Slums—James Connolly—The Marx of Ireland—Thomas Johnson—A Bolshevik With a Difference—Socialist Thought in Ireland—The General Strike—The “Just Price”—Restraints on Revolution—The Church and Labour—Proletariat and Peasants—Communism or Co-Operation?

I.

IN a little garden before a small house in a suburban road of Dublin a single tree stands sentinel. It is not a remarkable tree, but nevertheless a tree of some repute. Guided by it, looming through the dusk to distinguish this one

house from its fellows in featureless row, you scale a flight of steps to a front door which stands unlatched, ajar. You push it open and enter a narrow, dim-lit hall.

At the sound of the door's opening, from out of a hum of voices and a drifting haze of tobacco smoke within emerges a burly figure of a man. Out of a shock of unruly hair and a tangle of untrimmed beard and from behind a screen of strong tobacco a pair of strangely luminous eyes regard you, a large hand grips yours, and a rich, deep-toned, caressing voice bids you welcome.

A harmony of contradictions, economist, journalist, mystic, poet and painter, Æ—the familiar pen-name by which George Russell is known to all his circle—may be invoked here as an introduction to that other Ireland as yet unmentioned in these reminiscences. Ireland for long has figured in the eyes of the world as a political problem. The human Ireland—the Ireland of those who work with their hands in countryside and town, of those who labour for its enrichment in the field of letters and the arts—has been pushed into the background. Of that other Ireland Æ is the type and the embodiment.

Dublin in recent years has revived the almost lost European tradition of the *salon*, dead if it

ever lived in London and all but dead in Paris ; and there are other *salons* than Æ's. There is that of Madame Maude Gonne MacBride, famous Nationalist heroine of the 'nineties ; that of Mrs. J. R. Green, widow of the historian, an adept fingerer of every political pie ; that of Mrs. Erskine Childers ; that of Oliver Gogarty ; that of James Stephens. But in most of these and others, except perhaps those of Stephens and Gogarty, the political note predominates, and many of them tend to that cliquerie which prevails in London. None certainly is so catholic as that of Æ, where you may find Nationalist and Orangeman, Sinn Feiner and Unionist, arguing amicably together, and even some of those—who really do exist in Ireland—to whom politics are not the beginning and end of life sometimes managing to lead the conversation into other channels than political.

There are other things in Ireland than politics ; but just the same everybody is willy-nilly something of a politician. Æ is no exception to this inevitable law. He would rather talk about the economic than any other aspect of politics, but the stoutness of his Nationalism is unconcealed. He wears his politics, however, with a difference. Hamar Greenwood, during the worst days of the Anglo-Irish quarrel, once in the House of Com-

mons described Æ as “ an extreme Sinn Feiner.” It was a perilous accusation to bring against any man in Ireland in those days of the Terror, but it appealed to Dublin’s sense of the ludicrous. Nobody enjoyed the joke better than Æ himself ; it enlivened even the gloom cast upon him by the Curfew’s invasion of Dublin’s last remaining art of conversation.

For Æ never was, is not, and never will be a partisan in any ordinary sense of the word. He feels most deeply about his country, but he writes of it, as of other things, with passion, indeed, but without prejudice—a rare and a difficult achievement. Or so at least it would be for other men, but for him it is not ; for he writes, as he talks, as he thinks, never for the moment merely, but always as the expression of a mind informed—one must use these horribly long words to convey a really quite simple thing—by a transcendental political philosophy.

“ The universe exists for the purposes of soul ” —that refrain in all Æ’s writings supplies the key to his political philosophy. He is a nationalist because he is an internationalist, who sees no secure basis for internationalism other than a sane and satisfied nationalism. To manifest the highest in it a nation must be as free as possible from external restraint. It must similarly be

as free as possible from internal friction—that is why he is the apostle of co-operation in the Ireland which he has done so much to make a co-operative commonwealth. He believes with Mazzini that every nation has some special contribution to make to the sum total of human happiness and progress. But he goes beyond Mazzini in envisaging for the ideal nation-state a sort of over-soul, greater and higher than the sum of its human members, through whose mystical functioning alone is possible true spiritual progress, full communion with the rest of humanity.

To the touch-stone of this ultimate faith of his responds his outlook upon everything from churns to republics. One recalls, for example, few finer political gestures than that in which, while the ratification of the London Treaty hung in the balance in the Dail in Dublin, he pleaded in his paper the *Irish Homestead* for peace. It contrasts vividly with most of the speeches on both sides in the Dail, with their petty reckoning of the “nicely calculated less or more.”

“There are everlasting truths which outlast political systems and pass from outworn States to new nations, and which, though eternal, are of importance every moment of our lives. . . . No matter what high political principles men

advocate, if they allow the element of hate to enter into their advocacy they are deceived if they think their advocacy helps their cause, as the man who sees the light reflected in a mirror and advances to the mirror really is walking away from the true light, which is behind his back. These passions of hate and revenge have darkened Irish life for years, and we can understand how easy it was for them to take root ; but however natural these emotions were, they poison the inmost principle of life, and if we have to forsake principles, the last we should forsake is the king principle of our nature, the human kindness which is likeliest in us to divinity. We want a country of good-natured, smiling and kindly people, not a country filled with passionate revolutionaries who blight the end of all idealism by the means and forces they adopt to win their end. We might go on fighting desperately for some principle and find at the end, even if we gained our point, that we had lost every lovable attribute of humanity in winning it, and had become as a people without culture, without art, without science, without kindness, with nothing except the principle for the winning of which we had lost everything that would make its winning worth while."

" A kindly, good-natured life, the easy meeting

of friends, the cultivation of the humanities, music, literature, the arts and sciences, these are the crown of civilisation. It is the labour of ages to reach this, to tame the brute in men, to make them co-operate. . . . People too rarely realise in a gust of anger what precious things they destroy, how long labour took to build them, and how vain after repentance is when the anger is over and the deed done. . . . We do not dread so much the actual renewal of warfare as the continuance of hate. We can all endure physical suffering, but what many people cannot endure is that the soul of their country should get so blackened by hate and so coarsened by conflict that life in it would not be worth living."

There were many arguments for the acceptance of the London Treaty, but there are few Irishmen with enough breadth and depth of vision to invoke this best of all arguments for it which Æ used here. Yet he is at the same time a convinced Nationalist, but again with a difference. "I do not care," he once wrote elsewhere—in "The Inner and the Outer Ireland"—"whether I am governed from Moscow or Peking if my countrymen are happy. . . . The words "Republic" and "empire" are opaque words to me. I cannot see through them to any beauty or majesty to which they inevitably lead. But I do believe

in freedom. If the universe has any meaning at all it exists for purposes of soul, and men and nations denied essential freedom cannot fulfil their destiny or illuminate earth with light from the heaven which is in their hearts."

Though he is not himself a Gaelic speaker or a romantic enthusiast for the Gaelic revival, Æ nevertheless was strong in the belief that Ireland through Sinn Fein was fighting for freedom to manifest the Irish genius. He insisted always that the first thing to realise about Ireland was that the Irish people were truly a nation with a peculiar cultural or spiritual ancestry. He suggested that writers like Yeats and Stephens might have won but little repute had they not turned back and bathed themselves in the Gaelic tradition. To the question, Why do the Irish desire freedom? his answer was: "I think it is because they feel in themselves a genius that has not yet been manifested in a civilisation—as Greek, Roman, and Egyptian have in the past externalised their genius in a society with culture, arts, and sciences peculiar to themselves."

II.

One does not know whether his philosophy antedated his economic work for Ireland or *vice versa*. Most probably the two things developed

side by side, each reacting upon the other. But certain it is that his labour in the field of Irish agriculture cannot be considered by itself as a separate sphere of his activity unrelated to the others.

“No policy can succeed if it be not in accord with national character,” and he regards the modern co-operative movement as in the nature of a throw-back to Ireland’s ancient past, finding in it the modern expression of the clan mood. Certainly there must be something in this theory of Æ’s to account for the extent to which in the past quarter of a century the co-operative principle has laid hold upon the imagination of the Irish countryman and the Irish townsman.

From a rather different angle Horace Plunkett himself — of whom his biographer Lysaght lamented that though all his energies had been devoted to the reconstruction of Ireland agricultural and industrial, he was “unhappily not yet touched by the Gaelic spirit” — long since recognised the value to co-operation of the Gaelic revival. “As I understand it,” he wrote in “Ireland in the New Century,” “the Gaelic revival is an attempt to give to the Irish people their particular culture, and I believe that in the awakening of the feelings of pride, of respect for oneself and love of country, every manifestation

of the life of Ireland will find a new vigour. . . . In the Gaelic revival there is a programme of work for the individual. . . . Far from doing any harm to the practical movement, the influence of a branch of the Gaelic League is clearly useful whenever one seeks to stimulate the industrial and commercial activity of the people."

Six or seven years ago Æ wrote that " I believe that in half a century the whole business of Ireland will be done co-operatively," and everything that has happened since tends to confirm the validity of the forecast. Exactly the same process has been going on in Denmark, Italy, Germany, and wherever the co-operative seed has been planted. Now in Ireland, moreover, the movement is no longer struggling against opposition either popular or official. Sinn Féin always has been friendly to a movement so much in line with its own doctrine, and whatever else may be predicted of the first government of a free and settled Ireland, it is at least safe to say that it will give every possible aid and encouragement to it.

Æ has carried its theory probably further than any other co-operative thinker. He does not content himself with setting the rural problem on the high road towards solution, and making the small farmer as much the master of his fate

as he now is lord of his land. He is as much, or even more, concerned with creating a harmony of interest between town and countryside, and especially with finding in the co-operative order a solution of the urban proletarian problem. Sympathy with the submerged town worker has always been one of the strongest elements in his economic and social creed.

One remembers how, during the great Dublin labour upheaval of 1913, he insisted on issuing on behalf of the workers, against the advice of most of his friends, an open letter to the employers of the Irish capital which, whatever opinion one may hold of it, ranks among the most moving of human documents. "Nearly all the real manhood of Dublin," he wrote afterwards referring to this time, "I found was among the obscure myriads who are paid from twenty to thirty shillings a week. . . . Beneath their rags and poverty there was in these obscure men a nobility of spirit. It is in these men and the men in the cabins in the country that the hope of Ireland lies. It is these workers, always necessary but never yet integrated into the social order, who must be educated, who must be provided for, who must be accepted fully as comrade in any scheme of life to be devised and which would call itself Christian."

Nor is Æ one of those doctrinaire thinkers—too frequent in Ireland—who can see no good in anybody's conception but his own. To the critic who might charge that he would destroy the variety of civilisation by the inflexible application a single idea, he replies that what he aims at is making the co-operative idea fundamental in Irish life ; but to say fundamental is not to say absolute.

No record, however cursory and personal, purporting to cover the past decade in Ireland can ignore the prophet of a movement whose idea, to use a phrase which he employed when this was still only a hope of the future, is becoming "in the body politic what the spinal column is to the body—the pillar on which it rests, the strongest single factor in the body." It is true that latterly upon a movement not least remarkable for reconciling the diversities whereto Ireland has chiefly owed her world-fame, those diversities have to some extent themselves impinged. A section, at least, of the Unionist co-operators of Ulster found it difficult to maintain their loyalty to the movement in face of the political activities of its President, Plunkett. This was not the least of the reasons why Æ, most strongly of all his friends, urged Plunkett to keep outside national politics and devote all his energy to the building-up of the movement.

It is true also that latterly in another direction the official movement, as represented by the I.A.O.S., has tended a little to lose touch with popular sentiment. Not, in its directing body, as closely alive to the tendencies of the time as it might be—apart from Æ himself, who in the lofty room decorated with his own fantastic paintings whence he edits the *Irish Homestead* is in the Plunkett House but not altogether of it—it has hardly kept pace with the initiative in co-operative action by Sinn Fein. The complete co-operative organisation of the Irish fisheries, a long delayed and very important work, was only one of the departments in which it almost compelled Dail Eireann to usurp its own proper functions. A certain nervelessness and timidity have been apparent in the policy of the Plunkett House, which, however, with recent changes in its staff and under new and more settled political conditions, may now look forward to a new lease of life.

And when all is said, the leaders of co-operation in Ireland have wrought an economic and social transformation unequalled in any other country and of which the experience has been borrowed by more than one. Ireland has been singularly fortunate in the possession of the triumvirate who founded and painfully fashioned the co-

operative movement — Plunkett, its executive mind, who brought to it personal prestige, character, and means ; R. A. Anderson, its business man—" R. A.," that initial cachet of popularity, to a wide circle of his friends—for many years Secretary of the I.A.O.S. and, in his prime, one of the whole movement's strongest assets ; George Russell, its prophet and apostle.

These three have had loyal and zealous assistants—Lionel Smith-Gordon, now manager of the National Land Bank which is doing good work in assisting the breaking-up of the grass ranches and peopling the desert spaces of Ireland with men instead of beasts, unhappy as a good Sinn Feiner in his heirdom to a baronetcy ; Harry Norman, long Anderson's second in the Plunkett House and his successor as Secretary, most charming of the musical critics of Dublin ; Father Tom Finlay, the Jesuit who has been a tower of strength to the movement wherein the support of any parish priest or the lack of it could make or mar the success of a local society. Prominent among the former is Father Farragher, parish priest of the wind-swept Aran Isles off the West Coast, whose fisheries his efforts largely rescued from the sweating of middlemen. And among regional leaders of the movement too many to mention it will not be invidious to single out

Patrick Gallagher, affectionately known as "Paddy the Cope," who in poorest Donegal has converted a miserable peasantry under the thumb of the "gombeen man" into a self-respecting, self-supporting community, and made of the centre of his work at Templecrone the Mecca of all co-operators.

It is a fashion in some quarters to sneer at the Plunkett House, that Georgian mansion in Merrion Square which is the headquarters of Irish co-operation. But none of those who by working there themselves have earned the best title to criticise its work is minded to belittle the profound influence of that work in the making of modern Ireland.

III.

A memory of an evening at the Abbey Theatre stands out as a summary of my impressions of the Irish Labour movement. I see a triangle of three men—two on the stage serving as platform, the third rising from his place in the stalls among the audience to join in their debate. One of the two on the platform is a bulky, awkward sandy man, with a shock of untidy hair and a ragged moustache; the other a slighter man, with a wave of dark hair going grey crowning a clean-

shaven, lined, humorous face. The third, the interpellator from the stalls, is a long, spare figure, his white hair matching a pointed, aggressive beard thrust forward toward the platform.

The three men, G. K. Chesterton and Thomas Johnson on the platform, Bernard Shaw from the stalls, are talking about property, subject of a public debate between Chesterton and Johnson, the Dublin Labour leader. Chesterton upholds private property not, of course, from the capitalist point of view, but as the only ultimate defence of the small man against oppression. Johnson concedes that there is virtue in a reserve of proletarian property, but prefers that it should be communal rather than individual. Shaw, with the air of a man saying the last word in a debate full of suggestiveness but in itself singularly inconclusive, pronounces the formula that what really matters is that property should only be held subject to public conditions.

Not so much in what they actually say—for all three talk around their subject rather than about it—but in what lies implicit behind their words, one finds the expression of the conflict of three views about the Labour movement in Ireland. In Chesterton—who, as Shaw put it in a review of his “ Irish Impressions ” in the *Irish*

Statesman, "has done everything for the Catholic Church except join it"¹—we have the Catholic, the traditional view. According to this view property is an essential right of man, without which he cannot fully develop his individuality. Any inequitableness in its distribution is to be corrected, not by abolishing it altogether, but by extending it as widely as possible. The Catholic Church, as its attitude was defined *ex cathedra* by Pope Leo XIII., is as much opposed to capitalism in the modern sense as to socialism; and, while emphasising the need for individual ownership, emphasises no less strongly the need for using property in the interest of the community.

In this view, which is the Chestertonian view, the essential Ireland is a peasant community, and the existence in the towns of a proletariat is to be explained if possible in terms of that peasant community from which it has sprung, and upon which it is a latter-day excrescence. To Bernard Shaw, on the other hand, "private property in the earth is contrary to common sense and incompatible with human nature." He cannot, though he would, simply will the peasant out of existence by a feat of economic Christian Science, but he goes as far as may be

¹ Mr. Chesterton has since done so

in this direction. For him the essential Ireland is that of the proletariat, with the peasant community the anachronistic element in its regimentation.

In the review to which I have referred Shaw took occasion to inform Chesterton—"though I suspect him of knowing it"—that the prosperity of the peasant is due to his having allowed his Robinson Crusoe independence of his neighbours to be corrupted by the I.A.O.S.—"an order of pestilent fellows who preach that it is the greatest possible mistake to own your own threshing-machine, or your own churn, or your own horse, or your own steam engine." Chesterton may rightly be suspected of knowing something about the I.A.O.S., but from that knowledge he would draw precisely the opposite conclusion to that which Shaw draws. The one regards individual ownership of the land as the foundation of the new social order which co-operation is building; the other regards the work of co-operation as a process of leavening the lump of individualism.

And where does Thomas Johnson stand in relation to these antagonists? His position, curiously enough, seems to be one on the cross-benches between the two, equally aloof from the traditional which would square the present Irish Labour movement with the conservative past as



from the doctrinaire which would square it with the revolutionary future. Johnson, by contrast with these, appears as the realist, the empiricist, almost one might say the opportunist. Such is rather the attitude of the man who, though of English extraction, happens to be the closest in touch with the Irish Labour movement.

Johnson's is the third of the three names which stand out in the history of that movement. His predecessors are James Larkin and James Connolly. Larkin, the agitator *par excellence*, made Dublin Labour articulate without being really class-conscious, violent without being really revolutionary. Connolly, more of a theorist and a thinker, endowed it with a creed, and led it—or at least a section of it—into an enterprise in arms in which the social revolution was merged in the Irish revolution. Johnson, combining in himself some of the qualities of both his predecessors with few of their defects, had the harder task of building up the movement and establishing it on lines of practical progress.

IV.

Though it was not till 1913 that the great strike came in Dublin, the earlier year of 1908 had marked the entrance of a new factor into Irish

Nationalism—Labour under Larkin's leadership. The appeal of Sinn Fein had been, on the whole, first to a small company of writers and scholars, secondly to the smaller *bourgeoisie* of the cities. James Larkin appealed to the dispossessed. He held out hopes of an immediate amelioration of the lot of the poor; his Nationalism, like the Parnellite movement towards Home Rule in the 'eighties, had behind it the driving force of economic misery.

Sinn Fein Nationalism at this time was doctrinaire; it was not until after the rising of 1916 that it was able to acquire the character of agitation. The material lure was in the distant future, not a possibility of the present; it concerned the nation rather than the individual; one could conceive an Ireland which would be as a national unit economically strong, yet in which the lot of the worker might be no better. Nor were Arthur Griffith's protective doctrines compatible with the Radical dogmas of the Labour men.

Again, while Sinn Fein traced the Dublin slums to some thievery on the part of the British Government, Larkin, with at least equal truth, charged Irish employers and ward politicians with chief responsibility for the city's disgrace. To his intellectual sympathisers there was in Sinn

Fein and kindred Gaelic societies a trace of smugness and self-satisfaction, or of hysteria. "The Irish Irelander," wrote Earnest Boyd with some justice in 1913, "is convinced that there is some particular virtue in the mere fact of belonging to a race, apart altogether from its development. Sociology secures scant attention from people whose minds are concentrated on grammar, bagpipes, and kilts. The wearing of Irish clothes and the use of the Irish language seem to be vastly more important than the individuals for whom these benefits are intended. Whatever social evils affect the Irish people are understood to be simply by-products of an alien *régime*. The social and industrial problems which engage the minds of modern thinkers weigh little with Gaelic enthusiasts."

The Dublin slums should have been a fertile ground for breeding the propaganda of revolutionary industrialism. But it is doubtful if Larkin drew his chief strength, during the great strike of 1913, from the very poor. Certainly three years later the slums were frankly hostile to the plans of the insurrectionary bodies among which was included the Citizen Army, inheriting from the events of 1913. The women of the slums, many of them the wives of soldiers, were enraged by the Republican proclamation, and

attacked the insurgent leaders before the Post Office with bottles and a most violent language. The men who, after the failure of the strike, remained faithful to Larkin and his organisation at Liberty Hall were not the worst paid workers of the city ; nor was the Citizen Army an ill-fed or dejected body. The genuine Larkinite was a man with a streak of adventure in him, emotionally a strong Nationalist, of lively mind, a newspaper reader, eager for education.

James Larkin, an Irishman who had lived much in England and acquired some habits of English speech—he had been an agent of the English Transport Workers' Union in Liverpool, which according to the evidence of Sir James Dougherty, then Under-Secretary, was "anxious to get rid of him"—at first professed an internationalism. Personality rather than brains was his chief asset. But he had picked up some theories of the class war and of guild socialism ; he was interested in ideas ; his mind was alive, if a little confused. It does not seem that he was ever an anti-patriot, nor did he, like the true syndicalist, regard violence as an end in itself. He had a mission, he said, to stir up divine discontent ; but that was a rhetorical flourish which any reformer might have employed.

In theory Larkin was a pacifist, a believer in the brotherhood of man and the progress of

civilisation, in some sense a Messianist. But his quarrel with the English trade unions, and the peculiar devotion he enjoyed in Ireland, were powerful influences inducing him to invest the Labour movement in Dublin with a definitely Nationalist character. "Internationalism," he "explained in an early issue of the *Irish Worker*, means internationalism and not *one* nationalism. We, of the Irish workers, are out to claim the earth for the world's workers, and our portion as Irishmen is Ireland. So hands off, all predatory persons, no matter under what name or disguise. We are determined to weld together the common people of the North, the South, the East and the West."

The conflicts arising out of the strike of 1913, which led in turn to the formation of the "Citizen Army"—what James Connolly afterwards called proudly "the first armed citizen force publicly organised south of the Boyne"—were less revolutionary efforts than a transfer to the town of the old violences of the agrarian struggle. And, much more than manifestations of any formal doctrine, they were the effect of the personal magnetism of their inspirer.

Indeed, the whole beginning of the Labour struggle in Dublin seemed, much more than anything else, a personal duel between William

Martin Murphy, that cold, proud captain of industry, and James Larkin, the very type of agitator, an almost legendary figure in the contemporary life of Dublin, hero of industrial surprises and of violent, almost dirty, speech.

But Larkin, whatever his views, realised that nothing could be done in Ireland except on a National basis. He was careful to insist on his own Irish origin and to interest himself publicly in Nationalist movements. When, after the failure of the strike, he withdrew to the United States, he had, as the *Gaelic American* said, the satisfaction of hearing affirmed in Fenian circles "that James Larkin is a good Irishman is a fact that cannot be successfully controverted."

A profound French student of Irish affairs, the Breton writer Yann M. Goblet, who first wrote under the pseudonym of Louis Tréguiz, has noted this development of the strike-maker of Liverpool as a valuable guide for the study of the psychology of the Irish workers. "As Larkin secured his future by making it known that 'he is a good Irishman' and that 'he has rendered splendid services to the national cause,' so the foreign-cut garment of international syndicalism has had to adapt itself in Ireland to the eternal national thought. The Irish proletariat which rises above the question of wages to the fight for

an idea does not imagine that there can be any question of another fight than that of Ireland. The outlaw, despite the Larkinite placards, is no longer the working class ; it is the Shan van Vocht. The atmosphere of Ireland has transformed the imported socialism into a sort of Irish neo-Fenianism."

Whether Larkin will return to Ireland now that a national settlement has freed the Labour movement from its past subordination to national politics remains to be seen. Possibly he would find the situation so changed as to leave him out of his depth. But, if he should return, he would find still in arms two at least of his former comrades in the fight. The peculiarly Larkinite tradition has been kept alive pre-eminently by two people both by birth and association as remote almost as one could imagine from it—Constance Markievicz and Jack White. The former has brought to the Irish Labour movement the fury of the aristocrat *declassée* by her own choice. It is impossible to identify her with any "ism." She is that most irreconcilable of rebels—the rebel by temperament ; and, happily for her if not for itself, Ireland is likely for some time to come to go on finding room for those who must be "agin" something. Jack White, sometime army officer, holder of the D.S.O.,

son of the defender of Ladysmith, is of a different type, something of a mystic who holds that "religious myths or even fairy folk-lore are a far better preparation for mass-action than Marxian economics"; but the Ulster Irishman first responsible for the drilling of the Citizen Army is an equally fervent survivor of the Larkinite past.

V.

But one of his associates a returned Larkin would miss—that lieutenant of his destined to become a greater figure than his chief, James Connolly, who took the Citizen Army into action in the Easter rising of 1916 and shared the fate of the other insurgent leaders at the hands of a firing-party.

If Larkin was the creator of Irish Labour as a political force, it was Connolly who endowed it with a formal doctrine and, while bringing to its aid the strength of Nationalism, at the same time paved the way for its later appearance as an independent unit in Irish politics. Robert Lynd has described him as "Ireland's first Socialist martyr." To say so, he adds, is not a mere rhetorical flourish; "it is a simple historical fact that must be admitted even by those

who dispute the wisdom of his actions and the excellence of his ideals."

The same writer, in his introduction to the reprinted edition of Connolly's "Labour in Ireland," has given a personal memory of the earlier part of Connolly's long record of apparently hopeless work for Socialism in Ireland before he came into prominence as Larkin's second-in-command in the Irish Transport Workers' Union. "The first that I ever heard of him was when, as a student in Belfast, I belonged to a small Socialist society which met in a dusty upper room, illuminated by candles stuck in empty gin-bottles. One of the members used to bring copies of Connolly's paper, the *Workers' Republic*, to sell at our meetings. But most of us, I think, were indifferent to what we regarded as sentimental Nationalism. . . . Socialism seemed to us a creed for the world, while we regarded Nationalism as a mere noisy indulgence in flags and bands not different in kind from the patriotism of London stockbrokers. Connolly's lesson to Ireland was the essential unity of the Nationalist and Socialist. . . . Syndicalist, incendiary, agitator—call him what you will: it still remains true that his was the most vital democratic mind in the Ireland of his day."

Connolly in his book developed with con-

siderable skill the thesis that the only true repositories of the Irish Nationalist tradition were the working men of Ireland. To him all such "professional" patriots as Swift, Grattan, Flood, Redmond were bourgeois representatives who failed to recognise that the real issue lay between Irish proletarians, inheritors of the ancient clan system, and the landlords and capitalists of whatever race and religion. The really national leaders of the past were Wolfe Tone, William Thompson, an early Socialist pioneer, Fintan Lalor, John Mitchel, Michael Davitt; of the present, Labour leaders like Larkin with whom were allied (though they might know it not) the prophets of the co-operative movement and the Gaelic revival. "As the Gaelic language, scorned by the possessing classes, sought and found its last fortress in the hearts and homes of the 'lower orders,' to issue from them in our own time to a greater and more enduring place in civilisation than of old, so in the words of Thomas Francis Meagher, the same wretched cabins have been the holy shrine in which the traditions and the hopes of Ireland have been treasured and transmitted."

Connolly's family was northern in origin, and he always looked the Ulster type; his speech, appearance, and character were foreign to Dublin,



let alone Cork. By birth a Catholic, he was said to have lost his faith during his sojourn among English Labour men, and on his return to Ireland he often came into conflict on secular matters with the Church of his fathers. Opinion credited Liberty Hall with anti-clericalism, and certainly neither Larkin nor Connolly ever hesitated to hit back when attacked by clerical dignitaries. But in nothing that he said or wrote is there any criticism of Catholic dogma, still less a touch of anti-Christianism ; and he died a believer.

His *magnum opus*, " Labour in Irish History," is the gospel of advanced thought in Ireland ; I have met it in the hands of scores of people, some the most unlikely students of such literature, all over the country. Published soon after his return to Ireland, it shows how ready he was to modify the internationalism learned from books in favour of the Irish-Ireland idea. In it he made a free use of the name of Karl Marx ; but it is doubtful whether he really adhered to, or even altogether understood, the Socialism of that master. Connolly was a reformer, though a very violent and impatient one, and a Christian democrat.

The Marx theory, like modern Syndicalism, supposes internationalism, even anti-patriotism. But Connolly's book is an interesting endeavour

to exploit the Marxian conception of the class war to the profit of Irish Nationalism, or—one might equally put it reversely—Irish Nationalism to the profit of the Marxian conception of the class war. He argued that England was the exponent in Ireland of the feudal-capitalist system. "The seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries in Ireland," he wrote, "were indeed the *Via Dolorosa* of the Irish race. In them the Irish Gael sank out of sight, and in his place the middle class politicians, capitalists and ecclesiastics laboured to produce a hybrid Irishman, assimilating a foreign social system, a foreign speech and a foreign character." The downfall of "England" (or English influence), that is, the triumph of Irish Nationalism, therefore, could only be accomplished by the triumph of such a democratic movement as would have for its end the assertion of the "old Gaelic principle" of common ownership. "As we have again and again pointed out, the Irish question is a social question—the whole age-long fight of the Irish people against their oppressors resolves itself in the last analysis into a fight for the mastery of the means of life, the sources of production in Ireland. Who would own or control the land? The people or the invaders; and if the invaders, which set of them—the most recent swarm of

land thieves or the sons of the thieves of a former generation ? ”

One may compare Æ's view of the persistence of the old Irish social tradition, and Tom Kettle's contrast between the Roman and the Irish conception of society referred to in an earlier chapter. Connolly, indeed, despite his admiration for Karl Marx, was far from sharing all his views. His disciple and successor, Thomas Johnson, declares even that when one asked Connolly if he were a Socialist, “ he did not know how to reply.” He endowed Labour in Ireland with a doctrine, but it was a catholic, not a narrow and exclusive, social creed.

I cannot attempt to better Lynd's summing-up of Connolly. “ He saw that a hundred good causes go to the building of a nation, and he desired that they should all march forward not as rivals but in unison. He believed in a co-operative commonwealth in which the ideals of Sir Horace Plunkett, the Gaelic Leaguer, the Suffragist, the Republican, the Christian, and the Sinn Feiner should all be harmonised. Though he advocated the class war, he was interested in other things besides the class war. He aimed, like Sir Horace Plunkett, at the reconstruction of Irish civilisation, but he aimed at its reconstruction on the basis of the civilisation that had

given Ireland a place in the community of nations before the Dane and the Norman had laid it waste with fire and sword. He wanted to go back as well as forward to the Golden Age—to recover the old Gaelic fellowship and culture of which Mrs. J. R. Green is the historian. Democracy did not mean to him a hard-and-fast theory or an invented political machine. It meant the rediscovery of an ancient justice and freedom and friendliness. He desired Irishmen to see Socialism not as something imported from the Continent, but as a development of the best traditions of Irish life."

VI.

The attitude of practicality, of something like indifference to a large extent for formulæ, which has so markedly differentiated the Irish Labour movement from the development of parallel movements on the Continent, is personified even more strongly in Thomas Johnson. If one seeks an analogy between the Sinn Fein movement and the Labour movement, one might almost describe Larkin as the de Valera, Connolly as the Griffith, and Johnson as the Collins of the latter. The analogy, of course, is not close, but there are elements of comparison.

The period of Johnson's ascendancy in the Irish Labour movement has synchronised with the partial application of Marxian principles of action by the Bolsheviks in Russia, and the Russian experiment has inevitably influenced the thought of Labour leaders in all countries. Johnson has often been described as a Bolshevik, and so, perhaps, in a sense he is. This mild, pleasant mannered man of much culture gives one the impression that if occasion arose and the purposes of his movement could not otherwise be served, he might hang you politely but firmly from a lamp-post—with a graceful gesture of regret for the unhappy necessity withal.

But, if he be a Bolshevik, he is a Bolshevik with a difference. Whatever may be the philosophical basis of his policy, no man is less the slave of his theories. It would scarcely be fair to call him an opportunist, but the word may be used in a better as well as a worse sense; and certainly he tests everything upon the touchstone of practical possibility, and is as firmly seized of the limitations as well as the opportunities of attempting to realise by Labour action the ideal of a Co-operative Commonwealth in Ireland.

The Irish Labour movement has played a much larger part in the political life of Ireland in recent years than is generally supposed by

observers outside the country ; nor can anyone in touch with Irish affairs doubt that the Labour Party will be the most active and most energetic party in Irish politics now that self-government has been achieved. But it is doubtful whether a leader such as Johnson is to be numbered among those theorists who believe that the Ireland of the ancient clans is marked out inevitably as a Promised Land for collectivism.

Democracy nowadays is commonly regarded as more or less synonymous with socialism under one form or another, especially since the modern tendency became apparent of advance from political to economic democracy. Ireland, however, is traditionally democratic without being socialist. The ancient Irish social order stood opposed to the Anglo-Norman feudalism of which modern capitalism may be regarded as the economic successor. While democracy on the Continent is a revolutionary force, in Ireland it is on the contrary the defender of the most conservative tradition. Nor can the modern conflict between capital and labour develop along normal lines in a country without large industries outside its north-east corner, and of which the bulk of the population are peasant proprietors.

This is not to say, however, that Ireland is altogether without socialistic influences. Its more

recent history has many traces of State socialism, if not of collectivism. That history has tended to spread among all classes the conviction that the economic life of a country depends upon the initiative of its government. State socialism appears clearly in the agrarian laws which associated the Government with the farmer in the redemption of his land, in recent social legislation, and in certain undertakings of the Department of Agriculture and of the Congested Districts Board—which has, at the same time, rendered the greatest possible service to the “rural slums” of the Western seaboard. And even the work of the I.A.O.S., with its doctrine of self-help which is all against this tendency, attributes its success, as we have seen in our study of *Æ*, largely to the hereditary disposition of the Irish people for collective economic action; and thus there are those who regard its work as an intermediate stage between individualism and collectivism. Again, the Nationalist Parliamentary Party, despite its *bourgeois* foundation, did not hesitate to support such measures as the nationalisation of the railways. Finally the general democratic spirit of Ireland has tended to diminish the nervous terrors caused to the *bourgeoisie* in other countries by the organisation of the proletariat.

But the common feature of all such "socialistic experiments," as they have been rather loosely called, is that they were socialistic, so to speak, by chance; there was no *doctrinaire* element involved. When Thomas Johnson took over the leadership of the Irish Labour movement, and brought it to a position of organisation and strength never before attained, his policy as leader, "Bolshevik" though it might appear in some of its manifestations, was in line with this tradition of advance dictated by circumstances rather than by theories.

The outstanding event which made evident the entrance of organised Labour into the political life of Ireland was the general strike against conscription on April 23, 1918—a memorable date in the history of Ireland. On that day the wheels of industry, throughout the whole of Ireland outside the North-East corner, came to a complete standstill. Limited in period and unique in occasion as it was, it stood out at the same time as the first example of a successful general strike in Western Europe. It was an exceptional occasion, for organised Labour for once found itself in accord with the regular political parties and with the Church; but nevertheless it was profoundly significant.

Labour had before this begun to show its

influence. If Connolly's more or less Marxian theories had had but a limited success, his revolutionary spirit had outsoared the class war in dominating the Easter rising of 1916; and in return, his fate had given to his memory and his doctrine a popularity which no other action or speech of his would ever have achieved among the mass of Nationalists. But the presence of the representatives of Labour, on equal terms with those of Sinn Fein and the Nationalist Party, at the Dublin Mansion House Conference summoned to organise national resistance to the imposition of conscription on Ireland by the British Government marked the formal entrance of a new factor in Irish politics.

Indeed, it was Irish Labour which, besides lending the aid of its counsel and giving the chief demonstration of national feeling and power through the general strike, alone realised the latent possibilities of the Mansion House Conference. The Trade Union Congress at Waterford put forward a strong suggestion that the Conference, developing its membership and enlarging its field of action, should constitute itself the authorised spokesman of the Irish nation both in Ireland and at the coming Peace Conference.

That suggestion, if adopted, would have

transformed the whole Irish situation. The Mansion House Conference was a demonstration of national unity unique in the modern political history of Ireland. The maintenance of that unity, not only for resistance to conscription, but for larger purposes, could not have failed to advance the success of the national cause. Labour—represented at the Conference by Johnson supported by William O'Brien of Dublin and Michael Egan of Cork—which a few months later at the General Election was to stand aside to leave the field clear for Sinn Fein, was at this time sufficiently at one with Sinn Fein to make the maintenance of such unity possible.

Johnson and his colleagues, one imagines, would have had little difficulty in making a pact with de Valera and Griffith, whose places were taken after their arrest by John MacNeill and Alderman Tom Kelly. Joseph Devlin, one of the Nationalist representatives, again, well knowing that his political life was at stake and himself member of a working class constituency in Belfast—though his sectarian Ancient Order of Hibernians had been violent opponents of Larkin—might with little trouble have been brought into line. Again it was the sinister influence of John Dillon, friend of democracy in every country but his own, to whom a Labour

man even more than a Sinn Feiner was as a red rag to a bull, which wrecked the chance of national unity with all that it might have meant.

VII.

The subsequent history of Irish Labour under the inspiration, if not the actual leadership, of Thomas Johnson, is one of increasing independence of action in pursuit of its own ends—and in preparation for the complete independence of economic action which political settlement has now conferred upon it.

The first successful experiment of a general strike led two years later to another political strike, in protest against the treatment of political prisoners. This second experiment, however, equally successful with the first, had an immediate economic sequel which was in its essence revolutionary—the intervention of organised Labour to limit the export of Irish produce, and so to control the price of the necessities of life in Ireland. The occasion for this new display of the power of Labour was chosen with a good tactical sense. Its purpose was to secure that no surplus of Irish foodstuffs should cross the Channel until all classes of the Irish people had

received reasonable supplies at a reasonable cost ; and in this endeavour to impose restraint on the superior purchasing power of England to the advantage of Ireland the organised working class had no stronger interest than the unorganised and helpless middle class.

Irish Labour in this action was in revolt primarily against the material fact of excessively high prices for farm produce, but underlying its action there was a protest against the orthodox individualist view of social function. It was in its essence revolutionary because it sought to secure that production should be for use instead of for profit, that economic processes should be co-operative—in the wider sense of the word—and not competitive. It required that they should correspond to the social theory which is tacitly supposed to underlie all economic processes, but which in fact exists only as a polite fiction.

Thus in one of its manifestos, in which the inspiration of Johnson was clearly traceable, the Executive of the Irish Trade Union Congress and Labour Party made it a grievance against the Irish bacon-curers that, having assumed the responsibility for producing bacon for the Irish people, they thought that their only consideration need be to buy cheap and sell dear. The unhappy and bewildered bacon-curer, doubtless,

was quite unconscious in what he had offended. As a fact he did not go into the curing business to provide his countrymen, or any other people, with bacon, except incidentally ; he went into it to make money. And if he were told that this was a wrong conception of his social function, he might well reply that everybody was doing the same.

But Irish Labour here set itself to make the polite fiction of social function into actual fact. It charged not only—herein it brought national sentiment to its aid—that it was not right that foodstuffs produced in a country should go to feed other countries while people in the country of their production starved. It charged also that it was not right that, instead of a man's profit being regarded as the fair reward of his services to the community, individual profit should be recognised as the first incentive to industry and the national welfare be accepted as a secondary consideration. At the same time it did not deny the producer's right to a proper reward of industry.

One sees here a re-emergence of that doctrine of the " just price " of goods which in the Middle Ages regulated economic relations as far as possible in accordance with the universally accepted ethical standards imposed by the Church. The

mediæval code did not allow that it was lawful to give or to receive whatever price was dictated by the emergencies of the buyer or seller. Its theory was designed in the first place to protect the buyer or consumer. The seller of goods who had produced them by his own exertions was only allowed to demand a price which would recompense him for the cost of production ; while the merchant or middleman was only allowed to demand that price together with a fair remuneration for the additional value which he had imparted to the goods by rendering them more accessible to the consumer. But the "just price" was designed as much to safeguard the producer as the consumer. In particular, it was universally recognised that no price was just which did not provide every worker who had been engaged in the manufacture of the goods with a proper living wage for himself and his family. In this way the cost of commodities was regulated by the needs of the worker, and the "just price" was the great preventive of sweated labour.

The "just price," based on ethical standards instead of economic conditions, was a part of Catholic social teaching. Whether recognised as such or not, the course of action taken by Irish Labour amounted to a reassertion of that principle ; and it could be approved by the

Church in Ireland as in line with Catholic tradition. The point is of importance as showing how the development of Labour policy in Ireland takes colour, perhaps sub-consciously, from the Catholic atmosphere.

In another direction besides that of prices organised Labour came into collision with the farmers—or at least that section of them who were above the standard of the majority of small-holders whose farms were worked by their own families. Thomas Johnson succeeded in the later war years in enrolling as trade unionists the agricultural labourers hitherto completely unorganised, and notoriously in all countries the most difficult class to organise.

Chesterton in "Irish Impressions" ascribes Johnson's success in this matter to the fact that behind the Irish proletariat there is the tradition of an Irish peasantry, that in their families, if not in themselves, there is some memory of the personal love of the land. It may be that there is something in the theory; but there is a practical explanation of Johnson's success in organising the farm labourers. Up to the European war, as for generations before, the larger Irish farmers had been accustomed to meet demands for higher wages from their labourers by the simple expedient of letting their land revert from tillage to

pasture. But when during the war a fixed proportion of tillage on every holding was made compulsory, this means of dispensing with labour became impracticable, and the farm labourers, quickly realising the new security of employment which their indispensability gave them, organised to enforce higher wages from the farmers who were themselves secured by fixed prices for their produce.

Since the war a good deal of tillage land has relapsed again, and the Dail had at one period to deal with a widespread movement among landless men in the West to seize grass ranches—a movement which momentarily threatened to superimpose a new agrarian revolution upon the political revolution. But the general effect of the changed conditions has been to swell the membership of the organised Labour movement by the addition of much of the rural proletariat, the largest single element of the workers of Ireland, with the result that the movement has now attained a position of unprecedented power.

The Irish Labour Party to-day represents somewhere about a quarter of a million of organised workers, or a full quarter of the adult population of the country. Long before the Socialist International was able to resume its meetings, it demanded recognition as a national

unit and when the International finally met at Berne secured such recognition. The importance of its new status, national and international, is easy to estimate, but its policy is not so simple to define.

Some of the resolutions of its Congresses have seemed to identify it with the most advanced socialism, as when it saluted the Soviet Revolution and expelled the seamen's union owing to its opposition to the Berne International. But it is possible to make too much of resolutions like these, as also of those endorsing the socialist formula of "control" of industries by the workers. There are formulæ which are the common international currency of Labour organisations the world over; but the Irish Labour movement does not trouble itself overmuch about theories, and before all else it is distinctively Irish.

With half a million peasant proprietors in Ireland, the nationalisation of the land, which is the basis of socialism, seems to be impossible. Organised Labour has fought the organised farmers before and will doubtless have occasion to fight them again; but it has shown a marked tendency to deal with them when possible by conference rather than by direct action. Its programme seeks to make local governing bodies

give conscious and definite support to the development of co-operative enterprise, productive and distributive ; and Connolly himself, in advancing the ideal of a "co-operative commonwealth," never expressly regarded peasant proprietorship as inconsistent with its attainment ; while it may be noted in this connection that, according to a leading Irish theologian, a socialism which recognises private property is "not necessarily contrary to the teachings of the Church."

The industrial North-East corner of Ireland, where the Orange workers have kept aloof from the development of the Labour movement in Ireland as a whole, stands by itself. Here there is a true proletariat greatly outnumbering the owners of property, and restrained by no tradition or atmosphere opposed to modern revolutionary theory.

But in "Irish" Ireland, despite the existence of a large landless class in the country districts, and of an even more formidable proletariat in the towns—and even though the latter is largely impregnated with more or less Marxian doctrines—the Labour movement may be expected to advance, as it has in the past, on national lines of its own. The co-operative spirit in Ireland is stronger than the purely communist ; and economic development proceeds by way of co-operation rather than by way of communism.

If it would be foolish to ignore the trouble in connection with Labour problems which the new Irish State will certainly have to face, it would, perhaps, be even more foolish to ignore the possibility that Ireland, with her peculiar conditions, may be able to find novel solutions for them. One of the influences hitherto restraining the development of the Labour movement is now removed—the sentiment of patriotism in the national struggle. But the other two influences remain—from the theoretical point of view, the teaching of the Catholic Church and the immanent presence of a strong Catholic atmosphere ; from the practical economic point of view, the existence of a majority of peasant proprietors, whose former individualism now is tempered by the wide dissemination of co-operative ideas.

CHAPTER VI

FOOTNOTES TO FAME

*Letters and the Arts—A Sense of Proportion—
The Literary Revival—Its Definition and Scope
—George Moore—A Devastating Summing-Up—
A Rescue from Oblivion—The Great Schism—
Æ and W. B. Yeats—A Note on Yeats the Elder
—A Bitter Poem—Yeats as Talker and Writer—
The Abbey Theatre—The Peasant Drama—A
Letter to Lady Gregory—Criticism in Ireland—
The Dearth of Novelists—The Art of the Short
Story—A New Realistic School—An Unpublished
Gem—Three Irish Artists—The Future of Irish
Letters—James Stephens's Prophecy—The Inevitable
Question Mark.*

I.

I PUT up the above heading to my chapter of impressions of personalities in the literary and artistic life of Dublin because, so written almost to death has been the subject, at this date only the addition of personal footnotes—if indeed those—to the somewhat facile fame of that society may still be excusable.

So far as the modern Irish literary movement is concerned, the whole field has been covered in its broader outlines, and even with a considerable wealth of detail, in that truly monumental work of Ernest Boyd, "Ireland's Literary Renaissance," published a few years ago. Marred somewhat by the author's often arrogant and summary judgments, it is informed by Boyd's own very wide, if not always very deep, knowledge of his subject, backed by exhaustive research in the library of that good Irishman, John Quinn of New York; and it stands as the only attempt, and on the whole a very successful one, to present the movement in all its aspects as a coherent unity.

But, as the English author thinly disguised as "An Englishman" was bold enough to put on record in his "Dublin: Explorations and Reflections," this movement grandiloquently described as "Ireland's literary renaissance" is in fact of small dimensions in output of first class achievement, and its personalities of real significance are no more than a handful. Some of the opponents of Ireland's political claims have been, by way as it were of compensation, so prone to gush over her title to distinction in the sphere of letters, that it is no harm that one of her political friends should thus redress the balance. It does no damage to the real merits of the literary

revival in Ireland to preserve some sense of proportion about it.

What is called the Irish literary revival is, in Ireland itself, more properly described as "Anglo-Irish." The term applies to Irish literature written in the English language. It excludes, on the one hand, the new literature in Irish which is coming into being with the rescue of the native language from a purely folk speech into a literary tongue. It excludes equally, on the other hand, literature which, though written by Irish authors, is not based on what may be called a literary nationalism.

Properly considered, this Anglo-Irish literary revival is a by-product of the revival of Gaelic culture. Its output has been larger than that of the new literature written in Gaelic, but the inspiration of the latter colours all its thought. To me the Irish language is a sealed book. My acquaintance with its modern literature is limited to translations of some of the poems of Patrick Pearse; verbal renderings of some of the short stories of Padraic O'Conaire, whose work has acquired some European reputation but who carries his Gaelic principles to the point of refusing himself to translate them into English; and Piaras Beaslai's novel "Astronar," published serially in the weekly edition of the *Freeman's*

Journal during my connection with that paper, a work whose English translation certainly seems to support the claim of Gaelic enthusiasts that it is a land-mark in the development of "Irish-Ireland" literature. But, despite my ignorance of this purely Irish literature, I can recognise its influence upon Anglo-Irish literature.

The second definition of the latter excludes from its scope one of the chief of Irish writers now living, despite his dramatic incursion into the processes of the revival and the memorial which he has set up of its leading figures. When my acquaintance with the literary life of Dublin began George Moore was in the act of shaking its dust off his feet, to the accompaniment of that triple parting salute, "Ave," "Salve," and "Vale," which so rudely handled his hosts and contemporaries of the preceding years—though there probably is some truth in the suggestion that those who did not figure in the famous trilogy were even more annoyed than those who did gain that immortality.

Kept alive by the successive appearances of these experiments in literary "frightfulness," the memory of George Moore's raid upon the literary movement lingered long in the conversation of Dublin. Most of all was it commemorated in the talk of Susan Mitchell, Æ's

assistant in the editing of the *Irish Homestead* and most charming of Dublin hostesses. But finally Susan Mitchell worked the obsession of Moore out of her system with a book about him, critical study by an admirer of Moore the artist, but merciless analysis of Moore the man, which was some slight return for the injuries which he had heaped on Dublin.

Her book contains a pen portrait which can hardly be bettered. "George Moore's is a face dear to the caricaturist and at times itself a caricature: the yellow hair, the fat features, the sly smile, the malice, the vanity. But let someone begin to discuss an idea, and in a moment the contours change, the fat shapelessness falls away, the jaw lengthens, the bones become visible, the eyes darken, the brows straighten, a hawk-like keenness is in the look. One does not caricature this Moore; it is the face of the thinker, the man who handles ideas like a master. There is a duality in Moore that at once repels and fascinates, and makes a study of him a delightful adventure in characterisation."

There are few cleverer Irishmen than George Moore, but most of those who, like him, have sought their literary fortunes outside their country, have been clever enough to keep out of Ireland afterwards. Moore chose to break a lance with

the tongues of a town which always give back as good as they get. His trilogy is a mine of delight to the malicious ; but I doubt whether there is anything in it to equal that devastating summing-up of him by Sarah Purser, the portrait painter and one of the wittiest women in Dublin : " Some men kiss and tell ; Mr. Moore tells but doesn't kiss."

In one book alone of his Irish period, " The Untilled Field," Moore promised for a moment to be a real contributor to the literary revival. In his preface to the last edition of it he had actually the audacity to claim that it was the reading of it that gave Synge the inspiration which drew him out of the " board-school English " of his earlier work into the living speech of his plays. It is well known to every student of Irish literature, as Susan Mitchell has pointed out, that Douglas Hyde was the true begetter of the rich dialect based upon a foundation of Gaelic idiom, and from his discernment of the bony structure underlying the Anglo-Irish speech Synge and Lady Gregory, who both had some knowledge of Gaelic, were able to follow the way which he marked out. But Moore's extreme dislike of Hyde conspired with his own vanity to lay the credit to himself.

Apart from " The Untilled Field," his sole

claim to be a contributor to Anglo-Irish literature rests upon the astonishing collaboration with W. B. Yeats that gave birth to "Dermuid and Grania," which with its fantastic exchange of personalities—Yeats laying himself out to be substantial and material, Moore to be picturesque and beautiful—remains an excellent dramatic joke, but can hardly be ranked as anything else. George Moore's place in the wider English literature is assured as a master of prose, but in Anglo-Irish literature his place is not among its practitioners, but as its scandalous chronicler, its satirist, its caricaturist. He came to the Irish literary revival to pray, and remained to mock.

As a footnote to Moore it is, perhaps, worth disinterring from the oblivion of the files of the *Irish Statesman* a parody of him which appeared therein from the pen of Norman Anglin. It is a passage from a chapter of an unwritten novel—a novel which very certainly will never now be written :

"Ten minutes later I was purchasing a ticket for Westland Row. And as I paid my money over to the booking-clerk, I could not help wondering whether the Gael had disappeared yet ; but thinking that if the Gael had disappeared the booking-clerk would have said ' We are not booking to Dublin, sir, the Gael has disappeared,'

I made my way along the platform and took my seat in the train."

"Immediately I had taken my seat in the train, the train sped northward, stopping only once, at Crewe; but the moment the train stopped I expected porters to come running along the train crying, 'All change! All change! the Gael has disappeared!' But when the train gathered way again I said to myself, 'They will stop me at Holyhead, the boat service will be discontinued.' And I fell into a doze, thinking how no railway company would be lunatic enough to maintain a service with a country where nobody would be on the quays to unload their boats: nobody on the quays save monks and priests, waiting for their ideas to come from Rome, cut and dried and packed in. . . . I lost the thread of my ideas till the train was past Chester, and when the train was past Chester I was saying to myself, 'Priests and Monks, praying that their waters may be preserved from the contamination of the railway boat, contaminating their waters, contaminating the fishes they will eat on Friday, and so contaminating that part of their anatomy they call their But,' I said, thereby interrupting my own thoughts, 'there will be no boat running.' And looking out of the window—seeing the greening woods and the yellowing meadows fly

past—I thought what a useless journey I was making. ‘I am not even able to perceive,’ I said, ‘who has painted these greening woods and these yellowing meadows, and I am journeying all the way to Holyhead only to be told the Gael has disappeared.’”

“Only Balzac would have foreseen that the service to Kingstown was still running. Yes, only Balzac would have foreseen my surprise on alighting from the train at Holyhead; and it is pleasant to think how he would have described my joyous exclamations on perceiving the possibility that the Gael had not disappeared. I would like to write the scene on the boat as Balzac would have written it; but I must content myself with telling the reader how, as the steamer was gliding from the pier, I said to myself, ‘I am going back into the Dark Ages, I am going to find the Gael, I am going back two thousand years.’ It was wonderful to think that I was going back to Ireland. . . .”

II.

The schism in the literary life of Dublin which cleft the school of Æ from the school of Yeats dated from before my time. I have forgotten, indeed, what it was all about, though I fancy it

was some backwash of the major schism which divided the Abbey Theatre group on the one side from the Gaelic League, and on the other from Edward Martyn—the “ dear Edward ” of George Moore.

Apart altogether from the schism, the personalities of W. B. Yeats and Æ invite contrast ; they both lead and typify in their own persons two conflicting currents in the development of the literary revival. But an impression of W. B. Yeats may, and indeed should, be prefaced by a note on the elder Yeats, his father, the late John Butler Yeats the portrait painter. I never had the privilege of meeting the elder Yeats, who had established himself in New York before my time in Dublin. But I corresponded with him during my editorship of the *Irish Statesman*, to which he was a frequent contributor.

For the elder Yeats, best known as a portrait painter, was much more than a painter. He contributed to the paper first a further selection of his letters chosen this time by Lennox Robinson—an earlier selection made by Ezra Pounds had already been published—and later an irregular series of charming little thumb-nail essays, which read more like talk than writing, and were accompanied by personal notes which I was often tempted to publish as well. To the last number

he sent a poem, unhappily too long for reproduction here. W. B. always had his doubts of his father as a poet ; but perhaps that was because he would never have permitted himself that element of something like irreverence for the handling of an art form which the elder Yeats could keep out of his verse no more than his prose.

The art of the elder Yeats was the art of the conversationalist brought into literature ; the writing has the peculiar intimacy of speech. Like his brilliant, distinguished talk, it allures the reader down a hundred wayward and enchanting paths of thought. To those who remembered him in Dublin, such as Susan Mitchell, his letters recalled the portrait painter—" that brave fighter's stride of his in his studio back and forth to his canvas, each touch of his brush a challenge."

Perhaps I may quote—again a rescue from the oblivion of files—what seems to me the most characteristic of his little essays, which he sent me under the title of " The Heart of Belief." Here it is :

" Facility in believing marks the poet ; difficulty in believing the logician—and in this the philosophers are as the poets, for both philosophy and poetry come from the heart of belief. Philosophy, which we know on the highest

authority to be neither harsh nor crabbed as dull fools suppose, but musical as Apollo's lute and a perpetual feast of nektared sweets, is born of like parentage with poetry. Belief is creation, logic is destruction—can logicians believe? The Belfast men, consumed and kiln-dried by the fire of logic, have opinions, but are as far from belief as from peace and harmony. Did Samuel Butler believe? Does G. B. Shaw? Is Mr. Magee among the logicians? And the clever lawyers? What are their beliefs but opinions forged in the heat of contest and for the sake of contest? There are writers like Mr. George Moore whose methods of art are strictly logical; and do they believe? Certainly Mr. Moore does not believe in his friends; and how does he regard the people appearing in his stories? Surely everything he writes is charged with cynical unbelief and distrust. I am reminded of Swift, of all writers and artists the most intensely logical—and did he believe in anything or anybody? Neither in his pages, nor in those of George Moore, do I find the breath of creative enthusiasm and of belief. And what about the people of Dublin? So active minded and clever enough in all conscience, who deafen our ears with the noises and clash of destructive criticisms applied ruthlessly. Do they believe? Is Mr.

Joyce a creative artist, or the author of "The Squinting Windows?" These men observe and criticise. They do not create."

"What, you will ask, is this belief or habit of belief out of which springs the spirit creative as truth out of its well? I think it is a force of nature like gravitation. The birds of spring dream of and move towards a far-off event of blossoming and fruitfulness. There is something in man akin to this, though too often it lies under the frost of a persistent logic. A logician among the birds would stop migration. A G. B. Shaw among the humming-birds in the State of New York, and these timid and restless creatures would refuse the long journey to Florida and the South. All through the universe is a something which is creation and not criticism—whence comes philosophy and poetry—and also flowers and fruits."

The younger Yeats has not this gift of writing as he talks, which Æ has also in a unique degree. His claim to the remembrance of his countrymen, I think, will come to rest entirely upon his leadership of Irish poets and his work in the fostering, and indeed the creation, of an Irish drama. Upon the latter I shall have occasion to touch later in this chapter. As poet alone I rank him higher than Æ, in whom the sense of song, to

me at least, is overburdened with mysticism. There is mysticism enough in all conscience in the poetry of Yeats, but he strikes the truer lyric note. It rang very clearly in that early poem dedicated to Maud Gonne, which had, by the way, an interesting sequel showing the Yeats of later days twanging a harsher lyre.

In the autumn of 1919 Yeats contributed to the *Irish Statesman* a new poem, the first of any length which he had written for some time. It was entitled "A Prayer for My Daughter," and one of its stanzas ran thus :

"An intellectual hatred is the worst,
So let her think opinions are accursed.
Have I not seen the loveliest woman born
Out of the mouth of Plenty's horn,
Because of her opinionated mind
Barter that horn and every good
By quiet natures understood
For an old bellows full of angry wind ? "

The reference again is unmistakable to Maud Gonne, who had married John MacBride, sometime Nationalist member of Parliament, sometime rebel with the Boer forces in South Africa, sometime official of the Dublin Corporation—"this unusual water bailiff," somebody called

him—finally in arms again in the rising of 1916, for his share in which he paid the supreme penalty. Since her return from Paris Maud Gonne, as she is still generally known, with her invariable escort of two Irish wolf-hounds, has been one of the most striking figures in Dublin life.

But to return to the contrast between Yeats and A. E. The latter, as I have said, writes exactly as he talks. Words pour from his pen, as from his lips, in a flood. He finds it hard sometimes to keep them within bounds. The stop which he uses most frequently is the comma merely. Go to Æ's house on a Sunday evening and listen to his talk, buy your *Irish Homestead* later in the week and read his leading article, and you find therein the same train of thought, expressed in almost identical terms, as you heard him develop in conversation. Both speech and written word, once you attune yourself to their restless energy, are equally lucid, limpid.

But with W. B. Yeats the ideas expressed with a brilliant lucidity of conversation when he chooses are apt, when translated into writing, to be lost in a maze of Henry Jamesian prose. I had an illustration of this during my editorship of the *Irish Statesman*, of which Yeats was, nominally, a director. One evening in the United Arts Club, to which he was an infrequent visitor,

he developed in conversation an idea. He had been spending the summer on the coast of Normandy, and there, studying the work of Claudel, Péguy, and Jammes, was greatly impressed by the school of literature which, as he put it, was "beginning to make Christianity French."

He found these writers decisively religious, but at the same time full of the history and the scenery of France. He quoted again and again to illustrate his meaning the passage where Joan of Arc, told that the Apostles fled from Christ before the Crucifixion, cried out, "The men of France would not have betrayed him, the men of Lorraine would not have betrayed him." It is in vain that the nun Gervaise tells her that these were the greatest of all saints and apostles and that her words are wicked ; Joan, till that moment the docile shepherd girl, with half-sullen obstinacy repeats, "The men of France would not have betrayed him, the men of Lorraine would not have betrayed him." There is here implied, rather than directly conveyed, a complete fusion of patriotism and religion. Why, said Yeats, cannot we do the same thing in Ireland ? Why could we not, thus blending faith and fatherland, make our religion really national and our patriotism really religious in such an emotional unity ?

The idea itself was delicate and elusive ; but I carried away from the conversation a strong and clear conception of what was in his mind. I asked him to turn it into an article for the paper, which after some persuasion he agreed to do. The next day he came into my office, and, after borrowing the services of a typist whom he drove nearly into hysterics, departed to Galway with a rough draft of the article. Nothing more was heard of it till finally a succession of letters, followed up by telegrams, inquiring about it brought the manuscript into my hands. But in this long screed of four or five pages of the paper—so long that I had to spread it over two issues—the central idea, for all that I could discover, had vanished in a maze of words. There were traces of it surviving here and there, but the difference between the written words of “If I Were Four-and-Twenty”—as he called the article, thereby implying that he was dealing with his favourite theme, namely himself, rather than with anything else—and the spoken words which were its origin, was almost incredible, and lamentable.

I printed the article, of course—one does print the articles of one's directors, even so very nominal a director as Yeats, and after all he can write nothing wholly worthless—but without



sending him a proof ; I did not want it written all over again and what remained of the original idea finally removed. Afterwards he sent me a letter, which I published. It was as follows : " It was very spirited of you, knowing that I was eighteen miles from a railway station, to refuse me proof sheets ; but it has led your printers into several indiscretions. Huysmans and not Hauptmann wrote upon Chartres Cathedral, and as I am not standing for Parliament I did not write ' physical labour increases mental pursuits,' but that it ' increases mental passivity.' There are others. As, however, one only prints one's convictions from force of habit, they may pass." A characteristic letter.

III.

It is very typical of Yeats that he should be dissatisfied with his outstanding achievement in the literary revival—the creation of the Irish school of drama which found its home, both spiritual and material, in the Abbey Theatre. Here he showed a greater imaginative insight than Edward Martyn and the school of critics which denounced anything not clearly founded on the acknowledged masters and constantly urged the young dramatist to go to Ibsen or to

Shakespeare. The same school in Ireland denounced the peasant play as a nuisance and sought to develop a "native Irish drama other than the peasant species"—but with very little success.

Nearly a generation ago Edward Martyn discovered Ibsen, and as P. S. O'Hegarty, one of the few competent dramatic critics in Ireland, has aptly put it, "he has never got over the shock of that discovery." He has had to admit that the response to his demand for non-peasant plays for his "Irish Theatre" has been meagre in the extreme. To some extent it is probably his own fault. Psycho-analysis applied to aspirants in this direction would probably show most of them suffering from an Ibsen complex. They attempt to escape from peasant playwrighting only to become bemused by what is supposed to be Ibsenite technique. Certainly no Irish dramatist has yet emerged to write a non-peasant play with the same truth, independence and originality as first impelled the creation of the peasant play.

Ireland in fact begins with the peasant and depends on the peasant. Naturally her drama begins also with the peasant. Peasant themes are likely to continue to occupy her dramatists until the peasant ceases to predominate or until she produces a non-peasant genius. Nearly all

Irish dramatists are peasants or at least country folk. They naturally write peasant plays because they have no sure grasp of town material. They can conceive peasant characters fairly true to type, but they would flounder in an attempt to portray town life or problems. There is the further fact that rural life in Ireland is richer in the materials of drama than town life. Ireland is so largely a peasant country, with relatively so small a town population, that the problems of the rural districts necessarily loom larger than those of the towns in the national imagination.

And, as O'Hegarty has said, "after all, is there not this to be said for the peasant play, that it is sharply and definitely Irish, recognisably distinctive, and unmistakably racy of the soil? The town play, the play of intellect, of ideas, of people who wash four times a day and dress twice, is much the same in one country as in another, and any average English play, with a few minor changes of name, etc., will pass as an Irish one. But the peasant play is definitely and distinctively Irish, and no minor changes will make it anything else."

In a letter to Lady Gregory, published in the *Irish Statesman*, Yeats analysed the achievement of the Abbey Theatre and its causes. "We have been the first," he wrote, "to create a true

people's theatre and we have succeeded because it is not an exploitation of local colour or of a limited form of drama possessing a temporary novelty, but the first doing of something for which the world was ripe, something that will be done all over the world and done more and more perfectly : the making articulate of all the dumb classes each with its own knowledge of the world, its own dignity, but all objective with the objectivity of the office and the workshop, of the newspaper and the street, of mechanism and of politics."

Yeats felt, very truly, that any artisan or small shop-keeper when he sees upon the Abbey stage men of his own trade can realise that they are presented as he himself would represent them if he had the gift of expression. He went on to admit that, when he had to read a play submitted, he started prejudiced if the handwriting of the manuscript or of the author's accompanying letter suggested a leisured life. On the other hand, until the Abbey plays began themselves to be copied, a handwriting learned in a national school always made Yeats expect dialogue, written out by some man who had admired good dialogue before he had seen it on paper.

The Abbey players, too, he found vivid and exciting because they copied a life personally

known to them. Yeats lamented that of later years, when the manager had to select from ordinary stage-struck young men and women who had seen many players but no life but that of the professional class, it had become much harder, though players matured more rapidly, to get the old, exciting, vivid acting.

"I have never recovered," wrote Yeats in this connection, "the good opinion of one recent manager because I urged him to choose instead some young man or woman from some little shop who had never given his or her thought to the theatre. Put all the names into a hat, I think I said, and pick out the first that comes." The manager referred to is clearly St. John Ervine, who to his term as manager at the Abbey Theatre brought his passion for what he called "efficiency."

I remember that Ervine provoked a controversy in our correspondence columns by bringing a charge of "inefficiency" against the Irish people in general, instancing particularly the two businesses of acting and printing. It is typical of his attitude that he should call them both "industries." "When I was at the Abbey Theatre," he wrote, "I used to hear a great deal of talk about the desirability of not following 'the English tradition' in acting. When I examined

the argument, I found it amounted only to this, that an Abbey player ought not to have any knowledge of technique, otherwise skill. If there had been an Irish tradition of acting to set in the place of an English tradition, I could have subscribed gladly to it; but there was no such tradition. All the doctrine amounted to was that clumsiness and incompetence should be substituted for skill and competence. . . . When one considers the labour and training that went to the perfecting of that great actress, Ellen Terry, one realises how very foolish was the theory that a plumber had only to step on to the Abbey stage and, without any sort of training whatever, become an actor."

Any theory, of course, is foolish if you push it to extremes in this fashion. But Ervine runs naturally to extremes. One may parallel his statement that "the Irish workman in the printing trade simply does not understand what pride in doing a job well is." No one familiar with the really exquisite craftsmanship of much Irish printing can accept that sweeping statement just because Ervine had the misfortune to have one or two books indifferently produced in Ireland. In the light of these statements one is better able to understand why his managership at the Abbey, where he developed a positive genius for

quarrelling with everybody, was so much less successful, less truly "efficient," than that of his successor, Lennox Robinson. Yeats, of course, never suggested that a plumber "had only to step on the Abbey stage and, without any sort of training whatever, become an actor." But his argument that better raw material was more likely to be found in the plumber is entirely sound. Much of the charm of the Abbey acting consists in a naturalness which is really and not artificially so.

But Yeats, as I have said, is not satisfied with what he has done at the Abbey Theatre. "We thought," he writes in the letter to Lady Gregory on "A People's Theatre" to which I have referred, "we could bring the old folk-life to Dublin, patriotic feeling to aid us, and with the folk-life all the life of the heart, understanding heart, according to Dante's definition, as the most interior being; but the modern world is more powerful than any propaganda or even than any special circumstances, and our success has been that we have made a Theatre of the head, and persuaded Dublin playgoers to think about their own trade or profession or class and their life within it, so long as the stage curtain is up, in relation to Ireland as a whole. For certain hours of an evening they have objective modern eyes."

Instead of this, he goes on to confess, "I want to create for myself an unpopular theatre and an audience like a secret society where admission is by favour and never to many. . . . I desire a mysterious art, always reminding and half-reminding those who understand it of dearly loved things, doing its work by suggestion, not by direct statement. . . . I seek, not a theatre but the theatre's anti-self, an art that can appease all within us that becomes uneasy as the curtain falls and the house breaks into applause."

There, in a nut-shell, you have admitted the secret of W. B. Yeats's weakness as a creative intellectual force in the Ireland of his day. Not his mysticism—Æ is as much a mystic as he—but a certain intellectual snobbishness has set him aloof, and latterly has made him more and more aloof, from real contact with the emotional life of his country in all of whose manifestations Æ, with his wide humanity, has been a leading spirit. Even in the sphere of the drama which he made peculiarly his own, the same sort of "preciousness" has limited his achievement, not so much as a dramatist himself as the founder of an Irish dramatic school.

That is one reason why, apart from himself, those playwrights who as yet count definitely towards the establishment of an Irish drama—

Synge, Lady Gregory, Padraic Colum, Lennox Robinson and T. C. Murray, with the possible addition of Daniel Corkery—may almost be counted on the fingers of one hand. And of these Colum—I recollect vividly how, during a short period when he worked with me in a newspaper office before he went to New York, his restless energy used to create a kind of vortex of mental unrest all round him—is now lost to Ireland.

IV.

Poetry and the drama occupy together the chief place in the Irish literary revival. The position of prose writing, until lately at least, has been secondary. Possibly this is due largely to the slow development of a critical sense in Ireland. "Only two kinds of criticism of Irish art," Eimar O'Duffy has said, "are permissible in Ireland : gross and unstinted praise, or physical violence. . . . If the national vanity is in any way pricked, or the popular prejudices disregarded, the author may be assaulted, his mother's reputation may be whispered against, his father's house may be wrecked, or the performance of his play may be forcibly prevented."

The earlier incident of the riot which greeted the production of Synge's "The Playboy of the

Western World," and the more recent treatment of Brinsley MacNamara on the score of his "The Valley of the Squinting Windows," are evidence in support of the charge. On the other hand, there is something to be said for the view that such intolerance of criticism was a mark in itself of the existence of an unsophisticated critical faculty. It may be argued that an Irish author should rejoice that his judgments occasionally provoke resentment, and that his was not the humiliating experience of seeing his barbed words turned harmlessly aside by a desolating shout of tolerant good humour. Nowadays, indeed, "The Playboy of the Western World" is received with prolonged laughter as a rollicking farce, just as the guffawing of the neo-Shavian public has caused Bernard Shaw to protest against unseemly levity.

The essayist, like the critic, is a rare figure in the Irish literary revival. It is doubtful, in fact, whether any of the Irish essayists, rare enough in any case, may properly be identified with it. Tom Kettle, perhaps, might have been, but his independent mind refused to conform to any tradition. Robert Lynd, Irishman as he is and enthusiast for all things Irish, was worked mostly outside his country and is not in the debt of any Irish movement. Stephen Gwynn and John Eglington, the pen-name of W. K. Magee of the

National Library, perhaps have the best title to rank as essayists of the revival. But many of Gwynn's themes are remote from its influences, and Magee is not so much a contributor to the revival as a detached observer of it. John Eglington, laziest as well as most delicate of writers, we succeeded in inducing to become a regular weekly contributor to the *Irish Statesman*, an admirable discipline for him; but most of his contributions dwelt upon what he called "the decisive historical importance of the Anglo-Irish, so absurdly underestimated by Sinn Fein."

To my mind the most significant part of the revival on the prose side is one which has been generally overlooked—the art of the short story. It has produced scarcely any novelists of the full-length variety of outstanding importance. George Birmingham promised at one time to become one, but chose in the end an easier road. Canon Hannay brought to his study of his country a fresh view-point, some ideals, a tolerant nature, and a sense of humour. The last element has since blotted out all the others, and in becoming a professional humorist he has sacrificed his sense of proportion and his natural sincerity.

In his "Benedict Kavanagh" and "The Northern Iron" there was the promise of much more. But in "Spanish Gold" Birmingham

struck a too easily worked vein in himself. He regained to some extent his old vitality in switching on to a new political situation in "The Red Hand of Ulster," but apart from that his work since "Spanish Gold" has shown a factory-like facility, corresponding with a decline from reality, which in my view at least makes nonsense of the late Lord Bryce's opinion that the historian of the future will turn to him for the materials of social study of the Ireland of his day.

Much Irish writing seems fated to such a decline. Another instance is the hunting novels of Edith Somerville and Martin Ross, whose real talent made them tolerable and whose humour was genuine if it had an occasional bitter drop. But after—a very long way after—Somerville and Ross came Dorothea Conyers, with a quite racy gift of story-telling spoiled by her resurrection of the "stage Irishman" gallery of monstrosities.

As much of Irish writing seems to tend to degenerate in this way, so also much is imitative. There was a true native note in the earlier Ulster novels of St. John Ervine, but his later "Changing Winds" very clearly revealed traces of the all-pervading influence of H. G. Wells. The Wells influence, again, was visible in Eimar O'Duffy's "The Wasted Island," to which reference has been made in an earlier chapter. Curiously

enough, among recent Irish fiction of any distinction, the note at once most individual and most national has been struck by a writer long resident out of Ireland and now revisiting the glimpses of his past—Conal O’Riordan in the series of novels of which “Adam of Dublin” was the first.

The Irish school of writers of realistic short stories has only come into being during the last three or four years, and has as yet attracted little notice outside Ireland. The late Seumas O’Kelly, Daniel Corkery—who seems at present to be hovering between drama and fiction as his medium without being able to make a final choice—and Dermot O’Byrne have all had their share in the creation of this school; but Forrest Reid and Lennox Robinson stand out among this group of story-tellers—that is, if the realistic short story consists in one fine situation minutely wrought with subtle characterisation to a final issue revealed only at the last word.

The work of Forrest Reid—along with the poetry of Richard Rowley—has of late largely discounted the reproach often hurled at Belfast of its purely utilitarian pursuits and consequent utter lack of interest to the artist. They have taken Belfast as it stands, and by sheer artistry have distilled, from such alleged useless material,

work which occupies a high place in the literary output of their country. Forrest Reid especially—a little known figure even in the literary life of Dublin, where he appears from his beloved North only when there are croquet tournaments to be fought—looks out on life as he finds it in Belfast, and sees it full of delicate implications and fascinating surprises, subtle, complex, mysterious. But there is, perhaps, in his work too much of a sense of other-worldliness dominating all the prosaic facts of life to let him be a really “popular” writer.

Lennox Robinson may be placed at the head of the new school. Manager of the Abbey Theatre and author of at least one popularly successful play—“The White-headed Boy”—he has been less successful as novelist, and this perhaps has tended to obscure his title as an artistic short-story writer. There is in one of his stories a description of the art of the hero which might well be applied to Robinson’s own work when he is exploring the region of the *récit* and the tale: “He could capture and put on paper in extremely lucid language most delicate and intricate psychic relationships, adventures of the mind, spiritual crises of the most subtle, fragile kind, making them so right, so true, that the most fastidious critics could not

but praise them, and making them at the same time so simple and so exciting that ordinary people found pleasure in their perusal. He was never crude, and he was never precious."

It is perhaps unfortunate for Lennox Robinson in some ways that he was born an Irishman. There are certain themes upon which an Irish author may touch only at peril of his reputation and his soul. The finest of Robinson's short stories, at once the most powerful and the most delicate, is unpublished, and is likely so far as one can see to remain so. It would make the reputation of any writer outside Ireland, but it is known only to a small circle in Dublin from manuscript reading. In a reckless moment Robinson offered it to me for publication in the *Irish Statesman*; but, independent and "unpopular" as that paper was, I simply dare not publish it—and I think Robinson was very much relieved when he had the manuscript safely back in his pocket.

I write these impressions of Dublin literary life rather at random, and I find that I have actually spoken of the art of the short story without referring to James Stephens—that incarnation of "elfish energy," as Chesterton called him. Stephens began his literary career as—to use a convenient label—a "modern." *Æ* has chronicled his relief at his appearance: "For

a generation the Irish bards have endeavoured to live in a palace of art, in chambers hung with the embroidered cloths and made dim with pale lights and Druid twilights, and the melodies they most sought for were half soundless. . . . In their writings one wandered about, gasping for fresh air and sunlight, for the Celtic soul seemed bound for ever by the pale lights of fairy-land on the north and by the darkness of forbidden passion on the south, and on the east by the shadowiness of all things human, and on the west by everything that was infinite, without form, and void. . . . It was a great relief . . . to hear outside the walls a few years ago a sturdy voice blaspheming against all the formulæ, and violating the tenuous atmosphere with its 'Insurrections.'"

But the James Stephens of that earlier volume of poetry—very useful as it was in breaking up old moulds—has since undergone a transformation. His prose output outweighs that of his verse, and his prose writing, whether in novel or shorter form, is essentially the art of the story-teller. He has preserved his "modernism," but he has applied it to those ancient Irish traditions which sooner or later capture the imagination of nearly every writer. Susan Mitchell, probably with truth, sees in him a kind of re-incarnation of the *Shanachie*—those tellers of

tales by word of mouth who have almost died out of modern Ireland. But the old faculty seems to be inherent in Irish nature, "and I think it was a new order of Shanachie that arose in Ireland when James Stephens wrote his 'Crock of Gold.' " The energy, the exuberance, the fantasy of the Shanachie certainly are abundantly evident in his work. He brings to the telling of tales all the resources of his art as a writer and a fantasy that has in it an elemental power. There is in him force enough to endow a whole new cycle of tales whose quality shall be essentially Irish. If the folk-tale is to survive in literature, it will probably be along the lines which Stephens has laid down, keeping the old nobility and extravagance, and adding to these the whole resources of imagination and intellect.

A very scrupulous and patient artist is James Stephens, continually polishing his work, much preoccupied with the technique of the writer's art. I remember particularly one conversation with him—he is perhaps the best talker in Dublin, a good listener, less apt to monopolise the conversation than some others—on the occasion of a little dinner given in honour of Conal O'Riordan's return to Dublin. We were discussing the differences between creative literature and journalism and the varying mental equip-

ments required for the one and the other. Stephens, on the score of one little political book of mine, was good enough to say that he believed me capable of the former—an enterprise for which I have in fact neither talent, inclination, nor leisure. I contended that the two things required entirely different qualities of mind, and asked him how one could set about changing over from the latter to the former.

“Write a play,” was Stephens’s surprising answer. (He was himself at the time engaged in writing his only contribution to drama as yet, a little one act play of Dublin lower middle class life in which the Abbey player Kerrigan created the part of an old woman which seemed to be written expressly for him). I protested that the drama is surely the most difficult of all literary forms, calling above all others for a knowledge of technique. Stephens agreed that it may be hard to write a successful play, but he insisted that as literary exercise there was nothing to match experiments in playwriting. He argued that for the journalist or the essayist, for anyone whose normal form of writing ran along a single groove of thought, the dramatic form, demanding the development of character and situation expressed through dialogue from several angles at once, was the best possible medium of training

and discipline in the use of freer forms. The suggestion seems to me original but sound, and I hand it on for the benefit of those whom it may concern.

V.

Among Irish artists—to use the word in its more limited sense—but three names stand out as distinctively national and attuned to the same impulses as inspired the literary revival. There are many artists of Irish birth, but there are only three Irish artists of the first rank according to this definition—Æ, Jack Yeats, and Paul Henry.

Susan Mitchell—herself the most devoted of his admirers—speaks in her book on George Moore of Æ “whom reviewers in continually increasing numbers charge with being a poet, a painter, and an economist, tracing his career from the esplanade at Bray, where he preached the ancient gods of Ireland, through the counting-house to the bicycle whereon he roamed Ireland organising co-operative societies, and into the editorial chair of the *Irish Homestead*; but who, in spite of this weight of evidence against him, remains a friendly human being who loves a laugh even at his own expense, and who would be surprised and probably annoyed if he knew

that there are some who believe that in Ireland all roads lead to Æ."

But though the "human being" has come uppermost in Æ, his "dark side" survives. In his passage about James Stephens quoted above Æ repented his own past dalliance in the palace of Irish art to whose dimness he had even contributed a little ; but elsewhere he confesses the lure of the enchanted land—and in his painting, even more than in his verse, his two avenues of escape from the more practical side of Irish life to which he has devoted himself, he permits himself to follow that lure whither it may lead. There are competent judges of art who tell me that he cannot draw ; but, whatever its technical imperfections, his brush has the gift of fixing on canvas fleeting, magic memories of the Celtic fairyland.

If Æ's work as an artist is the poetry of dreams, the work of Jack Yeats is the poetry of reality—according to Arnold's definition the justest realism, the true criticism of life. Humour, pathos and romance—all are here on these little canvases and sheets of paper whereon Jack Yeats distills the quintessence of Irish life. With him you may dance with a little boy in Eirinn, or thatch a cottage, or warm yourself at a kelp fire, or listen to a singer standing above a crowd

silhouetted against the quiet sky, or watch the flood of the Dodder river, grey and yellow, flow below cottages blue in the dusk.

In all his work there is something unmistakably Gaelic. The work of Douglas Hyde in literature suggests itself as a literary parallel. If Hyde recovered folk-lore, Yeats created a folk-art. It is not the patronage bestowed by an intellectual artist on the evidently picturesque forms of a life below his own; one feels that this man of simple tastes and unassuming ways is akin to the life of the countryfolk, especially the folk of the West and South-west, among whom he loves to dwell.

In much of Jack Yeats's art, especially his earlier work, the interest is dramatic. Very typical of it is the demonic energy of the Western race-meeting, with its riders going like the very devil—but rather, one feels, as a momentary outlet for the melancholy of some unknown, lost heritage. If this be the art of youth, then that of Paul Henry—though in fact he is a younger man than Yeats—seems the art of age, when all this high spirit and sorrow have been reduced to a reflective calm.

Paul Henry's subjects are more often the older folk at rest in the cottage or at work on the mountain side, where, seen against the forces of

nature, they acquire an impressiveness and quiet dignity. They have a quality of being an essential feature and part of the landscape. So, too, with his seascapes and landscapes proper: each one is an attempt to realise the more removed atmosphere and mood peculiar to every group of natural objects. "He paints not the scene, but the soul of the scene," said Aubrey de Vere of another, and it applies here. Paul Henry's is a thoughtful, reflective art, bespeaking, perhaps, the artist's Northern temperament.

Ireland is fortunate in her possession of three such artists, all so strongly national, each of such individual distinction. The work of one at least—Jack Yeats—is already acquiring fame outside his own country, and will certainly be prized by connoisseurs in the time to come. It is questionable, indeed, whether in its level of achievement, if not in its output, Ireland's artistic renaissance should not be ranked higher than her literary renaissance.

VI.

An agreeable, entertaining society it is, this of the literary and artistic world of Dublin, of which one takes leave with regret. It has its little failings and weaknesses—as what such small

society where everybody knows everybody else must not have?—but I prefer to leave to others the easy task of criticising it. It is a task that ill becomes the stranger within its gates who was made free of its hospitality of mind generous at least to the stranger.

Literature is, or at least should be, the reflection of life, and to discuss the future of letters in the new Ireland involves prophecy of what that life may be—an enterprise too perilous certainly for the present writer, who has been fated to close all of his books about Ireland upon a question mark. But one thing may be said. It is a view widely held outside Ireland that the revival of the Gaelic language and the Gaelic culture were little more than a political weapon employed in the struggle for freedom, used chiefly for the purpose of irritating England, and destined to be cast aside now that it has served its purpose.

This view that the Gaelic cult has been merely something of a national affectation, and is fated now to die of inanition, seems to me a very shallow view, based on insufficient knowledge of the facts of Ireland. The emergence of "Irish Ireland," as I said in my first chapter, is the key to the whole transformation which has taken place. The assertion of a separate and distinctive national

consciousness not only underlies the rise of Sinn Fein, but *is* Sinn Fein. It is therefore ridiculous to suppose that, when that movement has been brought to political success in the attainment of national freedom, its whole motive force will henceforth be atrophied. On the contrary it is likely to come into fuller play in the fashioning of the national life.

“More than any other activity of man, the arts require peace and leisure to function successfully, and Ireland has had no peace for a round number of centuries. The gifts she has given to English art and letters are considerable and worthy if viewed sympathetically, but English literature is rich of its own impulse, and would not be noticeably the poorer if these gifts were abstracted.

So says James Stephens, perhaps of all Irish writers the best fitted to assume the hazardous mantle of the prophet, discussing the future of letters and the arts in the new Ireland. Ireland had her own war superimposed on top of the European war, and the post-war aftermath of lassitude, culminating in intellectual and artistic stagnation, has been even more evident there than elsewhere. What does the future hold for her in this direction ?

Stephens agrees with my view that the revival

of the Gaelic language and culture is no mere transient incident of the national struggle, but springs from a deep impulse and is destined to be an enduring factor in Irish life. He carries the argument, however, to a length which is the more remarkable in one who, as I have pointed out earlier, began his literary career as something of a "modernist," and is now certainly no fanatic where the Irish language is concerned. His prediction, therefore, is not inspired by his own prepossessions ; it is rather that of a shrewd and sympathetic observer of the tendencies of his time.

He predicts that Ireland will turn more and more completely from England, and will cultivate the human relations she requires in quite other directions. Unable to place any other barrier between herself and her giant neighbour, she will be driven to attain the necessary solitude by imposing the barrier of language between the two peoples. "Thus only can she stay not so much the emigration of men as the emigration of mind which has been our chief handicap in the struggle for life and the gravest national evil that has befallen us."

Given the return of Ireland to her native language, Stephens foresees this natural consequence : there will follow within a few genera-

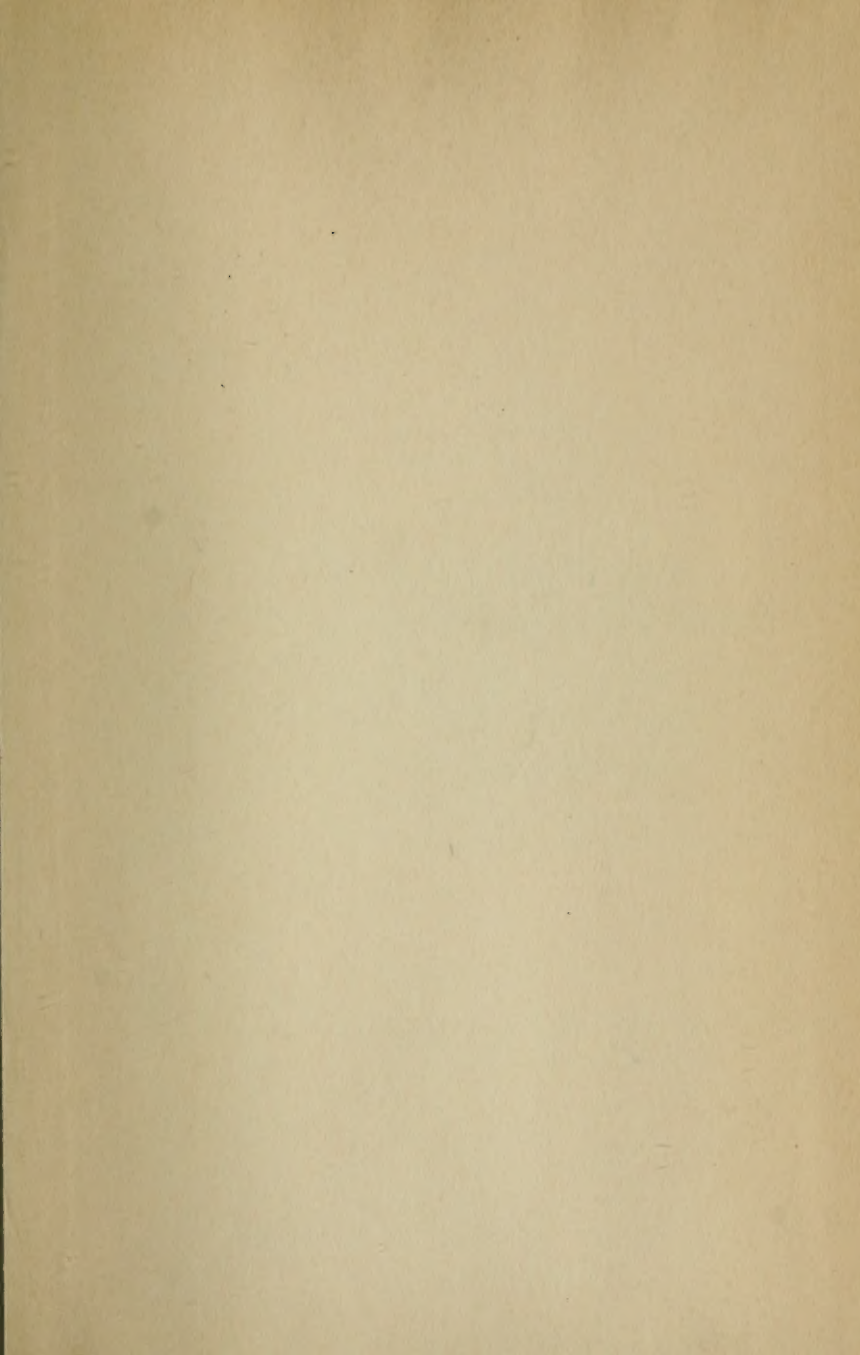
tions the almost total disappearance of Irish literature in the English language. More than this, the influx of a body of new speakers will break up the Irish language as it is at present known, and further generations must elapse before it is recast and capable of modern literary usage. What is true of literature will be true also of the other arts ; Ireland will be too busy setting her house in order to take much interest in anything else, and such work as she does will for a long time be naive and tentative.

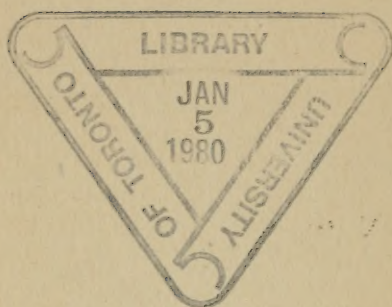
Perhaps it may be so, perhaps not. James Stephens may be right in thinking that Ireland "will not only retire from England ; she may retire from the world and, like some happy anchorite, she may live in contentment, unheard of, unmindful, until the time comes for her to do whatever work the gods assign her." Such a picture seems strange to one who for a decade has been in close touch with an Ireland agitating the world's stage ; and perhaps Michael Collins painted a truer picture when he foresaw the new Ireland playing a leading part from the outset in the "march of nations towards a new world order.

But how shall an outsider presume to take sides in prophecy when two of Ireland's own sons thus disagree as to her future ? If Michael

Collins's forecast is the more intriguing to the imagination, at the same time one can respond to the deeper cry of the heart in the plea of James Stephens that Ireland has earned her rest after one thousand bitter years, and be moved to re-echo his hope that she may never again have a history.







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